

**D**eus in nomine tuo saluum me fac  
Deus exaudi orationem meam

"Deus in nomine tuo saluum me fac, et in virtute tua iudica me.  
Deus exaudi orationem meam." Ps. LXX. 1, 2. [Vulgate.]

Above is traced from a facsimile of the Gathach MS. now in the R. Irish Academy.  
The MS. is of the VII Cent. and attributed to St Columba by O'Curry & others.

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THE LIFE  
OF  
SAINT COLUMBA







KETCH MAP OF NORTHERN BRITAIN (CELTIC 'ALBAN') AND OF THE NORTH-EASTERN PART OF IRELAND ('SCOTIA'): A.D. 500-650

THE LIFE  
OF  
SAINT COLUMBA

(COLUMB-KILLE) A.D. 521-597

Founder of the Monastery of Iona  
and First Christian Missionary to  
the Pagan Tribes of North Britain

BY

SAINT ADAMNAN

A.D. 679-704

NINTH ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF IONA

NEWLY TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN

WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

WENTWORTH HUYSHE



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## PREFACE

IN undertaking to render anew into English St. Adamnan's *Life of Saint Columba*, I am aware of the difficulty which must beset one who follows in the footsteps of the three translators who have preceded me—Bishop MacCarthy of Kerry, the Bishop of Brechin, and Professor J. T. Fowler of Durham. But the publishers of the 'New Universal Library', wishing to include so important a work in that series, think that there is room for a new translation upon somewhat different lines, and they are desirous, moreover, of placing such a translation, with notes, illustrations, and a map, within reach of all classes.

The versions of the two Bishops above mentioned are free versions, rather paraphrases in many parts than translations ; that of Professor Fowler, on the other hand, makes sacrifices to accuracy, imitating, as he says, the style and constructions of the original (the tediously recurring ablative absolute, for instance, in awkward positions) where the words might have been put into better English.

There is room, then, it would seem, to steer a middle course and arrive at a translation which shall read easily and at the same time be accurate. That is what I have attempted to do.

The basis upon which all must work who edit or translate St. Adamnan's *Columba* must be the famous edition of the text printed from the manuscript, written early in the eighth century by one Dorbbene, formerly preserved in the Monastery of Reichenan, and now in the public library of Schaffhausen, collated with six other manuscripts, and edited by Dr. William Reeves, in 1857, for the Irish Archæological Society, of Dublin, and the Bannatyne Club, of Edinburgh. It is an unrivalled monument of scholarship and erudition. As Dr. Skene says in his edition (1874) of Dr. Reeves's work (which includes the translation made by the Bishop of Brechin), Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba* has always excited interest from its undoubted authenticity, its early date, and its connection with the introduction of Christianity into Northern Britain. But, he adds, until the appearance of Dr. Reeves's edition in 1857, the real character of Adamnan's work and of the monastic establishment of Iona was little understood, and when his edition appeared the accuracy of its learning, the thorough research displayed in it and its wealth of illustration, placed the subject beyond the reach of controversy.

Upon Dr. Reeves's work, therefore, we all rest as upon bed-rock; he has given us an authoritative text in which the close scrutiny of half a century has found but few errors. Of his labours, and of those who have preceded me in the work of translation, I have gratefully availed myself, while working in my own way and on my own responsi-

bility ; and I have had the additional advantage of no slight friendly assistance from the Rev. George Cormack, of St. Etheldreda's, Ely House, Holborn, who has helped me throughout, and has revised my proofs. I express to him here my hearty thanks for his help and his kindness.

W. H.

## INTRODUCTION

As Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba* is hagiology rather than biography, except in the very last chapter, which is pure biography of the most beautiful kind, it is necessary, I think, for the better understanding of the work, to give a connected account of the life of the Saint. This may perhaps be best and most briefly done in the form of a chronological summary, in compiling which I have made use of the Old Irish Life of Columba contained in the Leabhar Breac, an ancient MS. preserved in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy. Those who wish for fuller information can find it in the many modern Lives of St. Columba, such as Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, Book IX; Healy's *Insula Sanctorum*; Dr. Reeves's and Professor Fowler's *Adamnan*; Alban Butler's *Lives of the Saints*; the Rev. John Golden's *St. Columba, the Apostle of Scotland* (Catholic Truth Society), and the articles in the Dictionaries of *National Biography* by Dr. Norman Moore, and *Christian Biography* by the Rev. James Gammack and the Rev. Charles Hole.

## SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ST. COLUMBA

A.D. 521. COLUMBA BORN AT GARTAN, COUNTY  
DONEGAL.

COLUMBA was born at Gartan (Little Field) on the night in which St. Buite, the Founder of Monasterboice, died, namely, December 7th, 521. His father was Fedhlimidh (Phelim), a chieftain of the clan O'Donnell, grandson of Connall Gulban, from whom the north-west of Ulster takes its name of Tirconaille (Tyrconnel). Connall Gulban was son of Nial Naighiallach, 'Niall of the Nine Hostages', King of Ireland from 379 to 405. Columba's mother was Ethne, eleventh in descent from Cathair Mor, King of Leinster, so that he was of royal lineage by both parents. 'Noble was the family of Colum-Kille in respect of the world', says the Old Irish Life, 'namely of the race of Connall son of Niall was he. He was eligible to the Kingship of Eriu, according to family, and it was offered to him, if he himself had not abandoned it for God.' Gartan, his birthplace, is on a hillside, at the foot of which are three lakes, overhung by dark wild mountains, once the haunt of numerous wolves. Cruithnechan, the priest, baptized him at Tulach Dubhglaise

(Temple Douglas) by the two names of Colum (dove) and Crimthain (wolf). At the time of Columba's birth, Justinian was Emperor at Constantinople, and Benedict, founder of monastic orders, had established his order at Monte Cassino. The Roman legions had been withdrawn from Britain a hundred years, and the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons were pouring into Britain in successive waves of invasion, driving the Christianized Britains westward. In Ireland Christianity had long been established, and Columba was a born and baptized Christian.

#### FOSTERAGE AND EARLY EDUCATION.

An Irish child of royal birth was always brought up by foster-parents. Columba's foster-parent was the priest Cruithnechan (Adamnan, Book III. ch. ii.), and he was also brought up by the O'Firghils. His childhood, says Dr. Moore, was spent with them at Doire Ethne, a place so wild to this day that the eagle, the raven, the badger, and the pine marten have their homes in it. Some of the tribe that fostered him still live at Kilmacrenan, as their ancient home is now called. While he was under the care of Cruithnechan his mind became imbued with the deeply religious feeling which was to lead to such great results, and he received the name of 'Colum-Kill'—'Colum of the Kill, or cell'—given to him, says the ancient Irish record in the *Leabhar Breac*, because he so often came from the cell in which he read his psalms to meet the

children of the neighbourhood. And the children would say: 'Has our little Colum come to-day from the cell in Tir-Lughdech in Cinell Conaill?'

#### HE STUDIES UNDER ST. FINNIAN AND GEMMAN, THE BARD.

After leaving the good priest Cruithnechan, Columba became a pupil at Moville, Co. Down, the Ecclesiastical School founded by St. Finnian in 540, and there he was ordained deacon. The incident described by Adamnan, Book II. ch. i., occurred at this time.

After leaving Moville he went to Master Gemman, an aged Bard of Leinster, and here he became confirmed in his love for the old poetic tales of Ireland, which according to Irish tradition he retained throughout life. It was while he was with Gemman the Bard that the incident, related in Book II. ch. xxv., happened, when Columba and Gemman tried to prevent the atrocious murder of a young girl.

#### WITH ST. FINNIAN OF CLONARD AND ST. MOBHI OF GLASNEVIN.

From Master Gemman, Columba went to the monastic school of the abbot St. Finnian, the Wise Tutor of Erin's Saints, the most famous in Ireland, at Clonard, on the head waters of the Boyne, founded about the year 520. Twelve of St. Finnian's disciples, among them Columba, were

known as the Twelve Apostles of Erin. On the day of his arrival at Clonard, Columba asked Abbot Finnian where he should put up his hut. 'At the door of the church' was the answer. Columba built his cell at some distance away from the door. 'You have not obeyed my directions', said the Saint. 'It is true that I have not done so', said Columba, 'but the door will hereafter be here.' And in course of time, as the monastery grew in extent and importance, the door of the church was at that spot.

Columba was ordained priest while at Clonard by Bishop Etchen, of Clonfad, and after his ordination he went with three of his friends and companions, Comgall, Kieran mac Antsair, and Kairreeh, to Glasnevin, near Dublin, where St. Mobhi, one of his fellow-students at Clonard, had a school. The pupils were dispersed in consequence of the great plague, known as the 'Yellow Plague', which prevailed in many parts of Europe in the years 543-4. Columba returned to his native province of Ulster, praying, as he crossed the Bior (Moyola water), that the plague might there be stayed.

A.D. 545. COLUMBA FOUNDS THE MONASTERY  
OF DERRY.

'In the far north, a few miles from Ailech, the stone hill-fortress of the Northern Hy-Neill, there was a fortified hill, the sides of which were clothed with an oak wood. It was called, from some long-forgotten chief, Daire Calgaich, the "Oak Wood of



Calgaich." The fort was given by his admiring kinsmen to Columba, and there he built his first church, one day's journey from the mountains of his birth, in sight of the sea which was to carry him to the place of his death. In after times the hill acquired the name of its consecrator, and was known for nearly a thousand years as Daire Coluimkille; it then took a prefix from the home of its conquerors, and was called Londonderry, but is now universally known by its oldest name of all, Daire, phonetically spelt Derry. A lane called Longtower still marks the locality of the church built by Columba in 545, and near which for many centuries there stood a tall round tower.' (Dr. Norman Moore.) While Columba was in Derry he meditated going to Rome and Jerusalem, and he did go to Tours, in France, to Tor-inis of Martin, as the Old Irish Life has it, 'and brought away the Gospel that had been on Martin's bosom one hundred years in the earth; and he left it in Derry.'

#### A.D. 545-62. COLUMBA FOUNDS MANY CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES.

During the years between 545 and 562 Columba founded many churches and monastic societies. 'A hundred churches which the wave frequents is the number of churches he has on the margin of the sea. There was a mass-chalice in every church', says the Old Irish Life. Durrow, Dair Magh the Oak Plain, on the border of King's

County and Westmeath, was the principal one, founded in 553.

One of the most famous of ancient Irish manuscripts, the 'Book of Durrow', the Gospels of the Vulgate, still preserved in Trinity College, Dublin, is attributed to Columba's own hand. The colophon refers to 'Columba the writer' of the work, but Professor Fowler says the colophon and some other parts of the manuscript, seem to be copied from an earlier one, and to contain errors which St. Columba would hardly have committed. Another of Columba's foundations was the monastery of Kells, in Meath, and from it is named another famous and beautiful manuscript, the 'Book of Kells', of which Professor Fowler says: 'It is impossible to give any idea of the splendour and elaboration of its ornamental pages and letters, or of the extreme minuteness of the work, which often requires a lens to trace it.' These two famous manuscripts of Durrow and Kells are the finest extant works of their kind, and both are now thought to be of the seventh and not the sixth century.

Arran, Boyle, Swords, Raphoe, Tory Island and Drumcliff were also Columban foundations. The most remote of his monasteries was that of Glen Columkille, in the westernmost part of Ulster. Here, on the north side of the glen, are the ruins of Columba's church and traces of the monastic buildings. 'Just below it the sea is always covered with foam round the promontory of Garraros, while mists shut out from view for six months the

opposite side of the glen and the path ascending it into the world. The Saint and his followers always thought the roar of the sea and mists sweeping across desolate moorland incitements to devotion.' (Dr. N. Moore.)

#### 'INSULA SANCTORUM.'

Such were the foundations of a single holy man in that astonishing age of piety in Ireland, well named *Insula Sanctorum*. 'Rich endowments in land, bestowed by princes and chieftains, and skilfully tilled by monks, enabled the monasteries of Erin to grant free education, food, raiment and books to the thousands who flocked to their halls. The monastic schools of the island for two or three centuries were regarded by all Christians as the chief centres of education . . . In the fifth and sixth centuries, amidst the dreadful shock of the fall of the Roman Empire and the desolation of Europe by barbarous hordes, Ireland, being at a distance from the ruin, became the asylum of learning, and monks from Ireland then carried back the torch to the devastated regions of Gaul and Germany.' (Golden.)

#### A.D. 561-3. THE 'EXILE' OF COLUMBA AND ITS CAUSES.

Columba's greatest work, however, was to be done elsewhere, among peoples who, while unaffected by the fall of the Roman Empire and by invasion, were sunk in paganism—the Picts of

Alban, who dwelt beyond the Grampians, in the eastern parts of what is now Scotland. It was in the year 563 that Columba left Ireland two years after a great battle between Diarmait, King of Ireland, and Columba's kinsmen, the Clan Neill, fought at Culdreimhne (now Cooladrummon), six miles north of Sligo, in 561. It was this battle, according to tradition, that led to his exile from Ireland, and his missionary expedition to Alban. It is said that Columba himself mustered the Clan Neill for the war for the purpose of avenging two grievances against King Diarmait. One grievance was that Diarmait had slain Columba's clansman, the young Prince Curnan, who had taken sanctuary with him after having caused the death of a playfellow during the sports at Tara. The other was a decision which Columba considered unjust given against him by Diarmait in the matter of the ownership of a book. The incident is thus related by the Rev. John Golden: 'In St. Columba's thirty-ninth year, while visiting at Clonard, he secretly made a copy of a beautiful book of the Psalms kept by the Abbot Finian in the church. The abbot soon discovered the fact, and demanded the copy as his right. The book had cost Columba many a sleepless night, and he stoutly refused to surrender it. Unable to agree, the disputants appealed to Diarmait, the chief King of Ireland. 'To every cow belongeth her calf' was the judgment of Tara's king. Sorely grieved at the loss of his copy, which he was obliged to surrender to his old master, he boldly exclaimed:

‘This is an unjust decision, O Diarmait, and I will be avenged!’ It has been claimed that this very manuscript, a psalter enclosed in a shrine, is that known as the Cathach, or ‘Battle’, venerated for more than a thousand years by the Clan O’Donnell (Columba’s clan), who carried it into their battles as a sure pledge of victory. It is now in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy.

But whether the story of Columba’s secret copying of the Abbot’s psalter be true or not, and whether the Cathach be that identical copy or not, the story is but one of many which prove the passionate love of Columba and of the early Irish ecclesiastics for fine manuscripts. Columba is said to have written out more than three hundred copies of the Vulgate and of the Psalter with his own hand. In St. Adamnan’s narrative we often find him described as writing in his cell.

#### THE BATTLE AND THE PENANCE.

King Diarmait, it is said, imprisoned Columba at Tara, but he escaped and made at once for his home and kinsmen in Tyrconnell. On his journey, while in the mountains, he is said to have written the pathetic Song of Trust, ‘Alone am I on the mountain’, in which is the remarkable verse referring to the auguries and magic of the Druids :

I adore not the voice of birds,  
 Nor chance, nor the love of son or wife,  
 My Druid is Christ the Son of God,  
 The Son of Mary, the Great Abbot,  
 The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

His kinsmen received Columba among them with enthusiastic affection, and all Ulster and Connaught its ally took up arms in his cause. The battle was fought, as has been said, at Cooladrummon, near Sligo. King Diarmait was totally defeated with great slaughter. Diarmait then called a synod at Teltown, in Meath, which excommunicated Columba (see Adamnan, Book III. ch. iii.), but the excommunication was annulled. Then, according to Irish tradition, Columba went to St. Laisren, his soul friend or confessor, and St. Laisren laid on him as penance that he must leave Ireland, go and win as many souls for Christ as there had been lives lost in the battle, never look on his native land again or set foot on its soil. Such are the legends and traditions which cluster about the 'exile of Columba.' The Old Irish Life says nothing of them, but gives the following perfectly simple and probable statement: 'When Columkille had made the circuit of all Eriu, and when he had sown faith and religion; when numerous multitudes had been baptized by him; when he had founded churches and establishments and had left in them seniors, and reliquaries, and relics of martyrs, the determination that he had determined from the beginning of his life came into his mind—namely, to go on pilgrimage. He then meditated going across the sea to preach the word of God to the men of Alba and to the Britons and the Saxons. He went, therefore, on a voyage. His age was forty-two when he went. He was thirty-four years in Alba. And the number that

went with him was, twenty bishops, forty priests, thirty deacons, and fifty students. He went in good spirits, until he reached the place the name of which to-day is Hii-Coluim-Kille (I-cilm-kill = Iona). On Quinquagesima night, moreover, he arrived.'

## A.D. 563. IONA.

It was from Derry that Columba sailed for the north, and probably, as Adamnan says, with twelve followers only at first. In an ancient Irish poem, which is in the form of a Song of Farewell, Columba thus describes his departure from his native land :—

How rapid the speed of my coracle ;  
 And its stern turned upon Derry ;  
 I grieve at my errand o'er the noble sea,  
 Travelling to Alba of the ravens.  
 My foot in my sweet little coracle,  
 My sad heart still bleeding :  
 Weak is the man that cannot lead ;  
 Totally blind are all the ignorant.  
 There is a grey eye  
 That looks back upon Erin ;  
 It shall not see during life  
 The men of Erin, nor their wives.  
 My vision o'er the brine I stretch  
 From the ample oaken planks ;  
 Large is the tear of my soft grey eye,  
 When I look back upon Erin.

There is in Iona a little bay which indents its

southern shore, Port-na-Churraich, the Bay of the Coracle. It was here that Columba landed. Above on the hill, is a cairn known from time immemorial as the Carn-cul-ri-Erin, the 'Cairn of the Back turned to Ireland', marking the spot where the exile found that Ireland was no longer in sight, and that here, at last, he had turned his back on that beloved shore. For as the story goes, in his voyage northward, passing the islands of Islay and Jura, he landed first at Oronsay, went up the hill and found that Erin was still there on the horizon, a blue line on the sea. On again, therefore, in his boat with the faithful twelve. True Irishman as he was, he could not bear to live away from Erin, and yet within sight of her, and so, passing the tiny islets which lie off the southern end of Iona, he made straight for the Port-na-Curraich, landed there, ascended the rocky hill on his left, gazed south, and saw—the wide unbroken sea.

Among the Irish manuscripts in the Burgundian Library of Brussels there is an ancient Celtic poem bearing the title *Columkille fecit*. This poem, says Dr. Skene, so remarkably describes the view from the Carn-cul-ri-Erin, overlooking the Port-na-Curraich, and the emotions it was calculated to excite in one of Columba's temperament, that it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that it contains the genuine expression of his feelings. The poem was transcribed and translated by the late Professor O'Curry, and it runs as follows :—



Delightful would it be to me to be in Uchd Ailiun  
     On the pinnacle of a rock,  
 That I might often see  
     The face of the ocean ;  
 That I might see its heaving waves  
     Over the wide ocean,  
 When they chant music to their Father  
     Upon the world's course ;  
 That I might see its level sparkling strand,  
     It would be no cause of sorrow ;  
 That I might hear the song of the wonderful birds,  
     Source of happiness ;  
 That I might hear the thunder of the crowding waves  
     Upon the rocks ;  
 That I might hear the roar by the side of the church  
     Of the surrounding sea ;  
 That I might see its noble flocks  
     Over the watery ocean ;  
 That I might see the sea monsters,  
     The greatest of all wonders ;  
 That I might see its ebb and flood  
     In their career ;  
 That my mystical name might be, I say,  
     ' Cul-ri-Erin ' ;  
 That contrition might come upon my heart  
     Upon looking at her ;  
 That I might bewail my evils all,  
     Though it were difficult to compute them ;  
 That I might bless the Lord  
     Who conserves all,  
 Heaven with its countless bright orders,  
     Land, strand, and flood ;  
 That I might search the books all,  
     That would be good for any soul ;

At times kneeling to Beloved Heaven ;  
     At times at psalm-singing ;  
 At times contemplating the King of Heaven,  
     Holy the Chief ;  
 At times at work without compulsion ;  
     This would be delightful.  
 At times plucking *duilisc* from the rocks ;  
     At times fishing ;  
 At times giving food to the poor ;  
     At times in a carcair [solitary cell].  
 The best advice in the presence of God  
     To me has been vouchsafed.  
 The King whose servant I am will not let  
     Anything deceive me.

In Iona, then, Columba decided to stay, and the little company no doubt soon began their exploration of the island. The late Duke of Argyle, in his little book *Iona*, will help us to realize what were the first impressions of the pioneer-missionary, who must soon have discovered that the island had other recommendations besides its being out of sight of Ireland. 'On the eastern side was the channel, which he had missed, giving much-needed shelter from prevailing winds. Above all it was a fertile island, giving promise of ample sustenance for man and beast. It is true Iona is a rocky island, the bones protruding at frequent intervals through the skin of turf. Even there, however, Columba must have seen that the pasture was close and good, and not far from the spot on which he first swept the southern sky he must have found that the healthy and rocky hills sub-

sided into a lower tract, green with that delicious turf which, full of thyme and wild clover, gathers upon soils of shelly sand. This tract is called in Gaelic "The Machar", or Sandy Plain. A little farther on he must soon have found that the eastern or sheltered side presented a slope of fertile soil exactly suiting the essential conditions of ancient husbandry—a tract of land which was as admirably adapted for the growth of corn as the remainder of it was suited to the support of flocks and herds.' An additional advantage was that Iona lay on the line which divided the Christian Irish of Britain and the pagan Picts—a desirable *strategic centre* for the work Columba had in hand. The Irish annals state that Conall, son of Comgill, the sixth king of the Irish colony of Dalriada, in Britain, granted the island to Columba. According to Bede and others, it was Brude, the Pictish king. The probability is that Columba found Iona unoccupied and unclaimed, that Conall promised not to disturb his occupation of it, and that when the Picts were converted to Christianity by Columba, King Brude sanctioned his right and title to the little isle.

#### THE FOUNDING OF THE MONASTERY.

Having decided upon the eastern slope of the island facing the island of Mull as the site of their future home, Columba and his companions no doubt at once set to work to put up their dwellings, which Adamnan tells us were of wood and wattles. There

was a refectory with its fireplace and vessel of water; a wattled guest chamber; the cells of the monks with the little court which they surrounded; the oaken church with its side chamber; the cell of Columba himself, built of planks, on the higher ground of the settlement. Dr. Skene, in his invaluable work on *Celtic Scotland*, has given, in the second volume, a most interesting description, with a plan of the site of Columba's Monastery and an account of its constitution as compiled from Adamnan. Columba's monastic system, he says, presented the same life of strict submission to a rule enforcing observance of religious duty, ascetic practice and self-denial, which characterized the monastic church in Ireland; and its doctrines in no respect differed from that church. The principal service of the Columbans, as of course of the Church everywhere, was the celebration of the 'Sacred Mysteries of the Eucharist', or the 'Mysteries of the Sacred Oblation'—the Mass; and the chief Festival of the year was the Paschal solemnity—Easter. The practice of making the sign of the Cross is constantly mentioned by Adamnan, and a very important part of the monastic system of Iona was its severe penitential discipline. The ordinary discipline consisted of fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays and during Lent. When any one, lay or cleric, desired to enter upon a special course of exercises, it was usual to select an Anmchara, soul-friend, spiritual friend, under whose direction the course was made. The monastic life of Iona, as everywhere, was a

special *Militia Christi*; those who adopted it were Soldiers of Christ, and their principles were Obedience, Celibacy (very strictly enjoined and enforced by Columba), Caution and Reason in speech, Humility, and one of the leading features in monasticism especially developed in Iona—Hospitality, with Kindness to Animals. All these monastic characteristics will be found in Adamnan's narrative, with some remarkable instances of very severe Penitential Discipline.

#### EARLY YEARS OF COLUMBA'S MISSION IN IONA.

For two years after his landing in Iona, Columba was busy establishing his community, and no doubt gathering from all available sources information as to his neighbours on the islands around and on the mainland. He would soon have found that Iona was in every way a most suitable centre for his work, and, what was of course of great importance, that it and the islands near it could support his *familia*. On this point the late Duke of Argyle, of whose ancestral property Iona is a part, gives some interesting information: 'The island', he says, 'now (that is, in 1870) supports upwards of 200 cows and heifers, 140 younger beasts, about 600 sheep and lambs, 25 horses, and some three score pigs. It grows also a considerable quantity of grain. But even these resources, ample as they might seem to be, were not enough for the growing number of the Columban Monastery. Very soon royal grants of neighbouring islands

made them tributary to the sustenance of the Abbot and his brethren, and foremost among these came the productive corn-bearing soil and the rich pastures of Tiree [the 'Ethica terra' of Adamnan]. Fish were abundant, and could be obtained at all seasons. The large flounders of the Sound of Iona are still an important item in the diet of its people. The rocks and islets all around swarmed with seals, and their flesh seems to have been a favourite article of food. Their oil also doubtless supplied the light with which during the many long winter evenings Columba pored over his manuscripts of the sacred text, or performed midnight services before the altar.'

'THE SALT MAIN ON WHICH THE SEA-GULLS CRY.'

There must have been constant life and movement on and around the little isle in those early days of the settlement on it of the Pioneers of the Cross. It is important to remember, as the Duke of Argyle has so well stated, that much of their activity was exercised on the sea. 'We must not forget', he says, 'Columba's frequent embarkations—sometimes only in little boats to cross the Sound, or to visit those adjacent islands, some of which were colonized from the parent Monastery; sometimes in larger vessels starting on some distant expedition to preach among the heathen Picts. *Columba and his brethren must have been skilled and hardy seamen.* How often from the Torr Abb—the Abbot's Hill—must the monks have

watched for their Abbot's returning bark rounding the red rocks of Mull from the southward, or speeding with longer notice of approach from the north. From the same spot, we may be sure, has Columba often watched the frequent sail—now from one quarter, now from another, bringing strange men on strange errands, or old familiar friends to renew the broken intercourse of youth.'

In that same ancient Irish poem, from which I have already quoted some verses, there is one verse which admirably describes in a few lines Columba the monk, and Columba the seaman. It forms part of the metrical farewell to Erin uttered by himself when on his voyage to Iona. He has sailed down the river Foyle and is on the Lough beneath the mountain range which rises above its western shore :—

To behold the fair Loch Feval (Foyle)  
 The form of its shores is delightful ;  
 Delightful is that ; and delightful  
 The salt main on which the sea-gulls cry.  
 On my coming from Derry afar  
 It is quiet, and it is delightful—  
 Delightful.

*The salt main on which the sea-gulls cry!* Here, in this fine line, is the real Columban note, here the very atmosphere of St. Adamnan's story of Columba—the sea, the rolling blue Atlantic that beats upon the coast of Erin and girds about Iona and the islands. Once more the Duke of Argyle gives us a pen picture: 'On one side the open

ocean, with nothing to break the fetch of waves from the shores of the New World ; on the other, innumerable creeks and bays and inlets, which carry the eye round capes and islands, and along retreating lines of shore far in among the hills. Columba may indeed have missed the oaks of Derry, and that intense love of place which is a passion with the Celt, doubtless made all lands but Erin appear to him as lands of exile. But if his eye rested with delight on the "dashing of the wave" and on the "form of shores", no spot could have been better chosen than that on which he lived and died.'

#### A.D. 565. THE MISSION TO KING BRUDE.

St. Columba must have been well aware long before he left Ireland that the spirit of clanship was as strong in North Britain as it was in his native land, not only among his Irish kindred and fellow-countrymen in the over-sea Christian Dalriada (now Argyle), his neighbours to the south-east, but also among the Picts. He well knew that if the Pictish tribes were to be converted to the Faith of Christ he must begin with their king, whose example the people would surely follow. Columba set out, therefore, in the year 565, on the longest journey he had made since his landing in Iona, a journey by land and water, due north-east, straight up that wonderful valley, the Glen Mor nan Albin, the 'Great Glen of Alba', with its long, narrow, strung-out lakes, Lochs Linnhe, Lochy



and Ness, now united in a continuous watercourse by the Caledonian Canal. His companions were St. Comgall and St. Canice, Irish Picts, who would feel more at home with King Brude than would Columba. St. Adamnan tells us how King Brude barred his gates against the Mission, how the Druids opposed Columba in every possible way, and how, eventually, the Cross triumphed in that far distant citadel of Paganism. Those whom the legions of the Cæsars could not subdue by the sword were brought under the yoke of Christ by these few dauntless, unarmed missionaries. The peril and the toil were great. 'It was a daring adventure', says Mr. Morrison (*Columba: His Life and Times*), 'full of hazard, thus to pierce into the heart of Pictland. It called for undaunted courage and resource and unwavering trust in the leader. Yet how few of the travellers who pass through that glen to day—with its deep lochs and its dark and solemn forests and all its mystery of light and shadow—know anything of the little band of heroes who threaded it so many centuries ago? And what was the heathen faith which these Soldiers of Christ overthrew? We often hear it spoken of as Druidism, and Columba was certainly opposed at King Brude's court, as Adamnan tells us, by Druids or Magi, men who were credited with powers over the spiritual world. But the elaborate Druidism that Cæsar and Pliny tell of, with its hierarchies and its human sacrifices and its sacred mistletoe and its serpent egg—of all that there is not one trace in Scotland. It was a

vague dread of innumerable spirits ; the world of Nature was quivering with life ; in every spring and well there was a spirit, in every loch there lived some dreaded being. When the echoes of thunder rolled through the mountain corries, or when the wild storm beat the forests of oak, voices from the Great Mystery were speaking.' It was a worship of the living powers of Nature—a sort of fetishism, Professor Skene calls it, which peopled all the objects of nature with malignant beings, to whose agency its phenomena were attributed, and the Magi or Druids exercised great influence among the people from a belief that they were able through their aid to practise a species of magic or witchcraft, which might either be used to benefit those who sought their assistance, or to injure those to whom they were opposed. To Columba these living powers of nature were real demons, to be overcome by the power of the true God.

Here, then, among the Picts as well as in the islands, Columba and his followers worked indefatigably for many years. 'Everywhere they preached, instructed and baptized ; everywhere they planted churches and schools, and everywhere their preaching was confirmed by miracles. The islands round were evangelized in turn. The Orkneys and Shetlands, the Hebrides and the Faroes heard and accepted the Gospel. On distant Iceland missions were established, and even within the lifetime of its great founder, Iona was able to send forth missionaries to the English

kingdom of Northumbria, to the Isle of Man, and to South Britain. It had its fleet of boats to visit the various groups of islands and make their way up the bays. With Cormac, the most skilled and daring of the monk navigators [see the remarkable account of his voyage to the North, in Book II. ch. xlii.], the venerable Abbot traversed the sombre gulfs and straits regardless of danger, unsparing of toil.' (Golden.)

A.D. 574. AEDHAN IS ORDAINED KING OF BRITISH DALRIADA BY COLUMBA AT IONA.

During the first ten years of his missionary labours in North Britain, Columba not only established his ecclesiastical influence and jurisdiction far and wide, on the mainland and in the isles, but also asserted himself as a statesman. It must be remembered that the effects of his mission were largely political as well as religious; his royal blood, his connection with many of the noblest families of Ireland, his kinship with the great Irish colony of Dalriada in North Britain (in what is now Argyle) made him an important factor in the history of northern Britain. An event now occurred which shows to what a height the power of Columba had attained. Conall, son of Comgall, King of the British Dalriada, died in the year 574, and, according to the ancient law, he should have been succeeded by his cousin Eogan, whose claim was favoured by Columba. Adamnan tells us, however (in Book III. ch. v.), how in a vision Columba

was directed to ordain another cousin of Conall's, Aedhan, and upon Columba's making this known—and, as Skene says, there was no gainsaying such a statement by one in Columba's position—Aedhan came to Iona and was there ordained King of Dalriada by Columba—*the earliest recorded instance of a royal coronation in Great Britain*. The fact of Aidan going to Iona for consecration shows at once the importance of Columba and the already established sanctity of the island. Historians have especially noticed in Adamnan's narrative the use of the term *ordinare regem*—to *ordain* the king. The fact that St. Columba laid his hand on King Aidan's head, indicates the affinity between the sacring of a king and the ordination of a priest, and shows that the imposition of hands was part of the ceremonial of the consecration of a king in the seventh century.

#### A.D. 575. THE CONVENTION OF DRUMCEATT.

In the year 575, Aedh, son of Ainmire, King of Ireland, summoned a great Convention to be held at Drumceatt, a long mound on the river Roe, near Newtownlimavaddy, in the county of Londonderry. It is now called the Mullagh, or Daisy Hill. All the minor kings and heads of tribes, and the principal clergy of Ireland, St. Columba; and the newly-consecrated King of Dalriada, Aidan, were present. Present also was the chief of the famous Bards of Ireland, Dallan Forgaill, afterwards Saint Dallan, a man of illustrious ancestry, who wrote

a poem entitled 'Amhra Choluim Chille'—'The Praises of Columba'—still extant in manuscript. In this poem it is stated that Columba's company consisted of forty priests, twenty bishops of noble worth, thirty deacons, and fifty youths, and that the reasons for which he came to the Convention were three: (1) for the releasing of Scannlan Mor, son of Cennfæladh, King of Ossory, in Leinster, a hostage in the hands of Aedh, Columba being surety for him that he would be released at the end of a year; (2) for the staying of the poets in Ireland—for they were under sentence of banishment on account of their burdensomeness; (3) for pacification between the men of Ireland and Alban about Dalriada. In all these objects Columba was successful.

#### SCANNLAN THE THIRSTY

The account of the release of Scannlan is one of the most curious passages in the Old Irish Life of Columba. The end of the year found Scannlan still a prisoner in the hands of Aedh. 'He was not released, and no hostage was accepted in his stead. And a wicker hut was constructed round him, without any passage out of it save a way through which a little *salted food* and a small allowance of ale used to be given to him. And fifty warriors were used to be around the hut, outside, guarding him. And there were nine chains upon him in the hut. And when he would see anyone going past, what he would say is: "A

drink", says he. And this thing was reported to Columkille to Hii (Iona), and he wept greatly at what he heard; and this it was that brought him quickly from the East.' When at the Convention Columba demanded the release of Scannlan. 'I shall not release him', said King Aedh, 'until he dies in the hut in which he is'; whereupon the Saint said, 'We will not pursue the subject further, but, if it be pleasing to God, may it be he that shall take off my shoes to-night at Matins in whatsoever place I may be.' Then Columba left the Convention and went to the Dubh-regles, the Black Abbey Church, at Derry. Not long after his departure a thunderbolt fell among the members of the assembly on the hill of Drumceatt, and they all 'turned their faces to the ground.' Scannlan, set free by an angel, made his way straight to the Black Church at Derry, and while Columba, at Matins, was going past the chancel screen, Scannlan assisted to take off his shoes. Then ensues the following strange dialogue:—

Columba asks, 'Who is this?'

'Scannlan', answered he.

'Hast thou any news?' asked Columkille.

'A drink', said Scannlan.

'Hast thou brought us a blessing?' asked Columkille.

'A drink', said Scannlan.

'Say how camest thou?' said Columkille.

'A drink', said Scannlan.

Columba loses patience, and utters the imprecation:—

‘Delay in answering attend thy successors!’

‘Speak not so’, said Scannlan. ‘Thou shalt always have their rents and their tributes and customs.’

The Saint is pacified, and exclaims, ‘May bishops and kings be of thy race for ever! Here is one drink for thee, to wit, a vessel of ale containing enough for three.’

Scannlan then lifted the vessel between his two hands and drank the contents in one drink. And he afterwards ate his meal, to wit, seven joints of old bacon and ten wheaten cakes; after which he lay down and [it is not surprising to learn] was three days and three nights in one sleep. He then arose, and was conducted to Ossory, and the great bachall [crozier] was sent with him. The day he arrived was the day his father, the King of Ossory, died through grief for him. And he afterwards assumed the kingship of Ossory, and granted a tribute from the Ossorians every seventh year from that day to Columkille. And it is in this wise that Scannlan was released.

It should be noted, in connection with this quaint narrative, which bears upon it the stamp of human nature and of veracity, that Scannlan was not only imprisoned but tortured, for his diet of salted food with a ‘small allowance’ (the Celtic word is *teirci*, lit. ‘scarcity’) of ale, can only be regarded in that light. Hence his intolerable thirst, his appeals to the passers-by, and his reiteration of ‘drink, drink’ when he was kneeling—half dead, no doubt, from hunger and thirst—to take off Columba’s shoes at

the chancel screen of the church. Then, as to the impatient imprecation of the Saint, that delay in answering, i.e. hesitation of speech or stuttering, might afflict his posterity, it is interesting to know that the tradition of this imprecation is not yet extinct in Scannlan's country of Ossory, and it is even asserted that stuttering is still a characteristic of Scannlan's descendants there. And, lastly, the interesting statement that the great bachull or pastoral staff of Columba was sent with Scannlan, no doubt as a sign of confirmation of his rights, tells surely of the widespread influence and authority of the Saint. 'He handed over to him [Scannlan] his crook as a sure staff in slippery places and a safeguard n<sup>e</sup> every adversity; faithfully promising in the Lord that by its help, Christ granting it that virtue, he should come safe and sound out of the dangers that beset him; and admonishing him that he should eventually send back the staff to St. Laisren, his disciple, then ruler of the Monastery of Durrow.'

#### THE 'STAYING' OF THE BARDS.

The burdensomeness of the poets arose from the fact, as Dallan (the Ollamh, or chief poet) tells us, that there used to be thirty of them in the company of each Ollamh, and fifteen in that of each Anrad, or poet of the second rank; and that they had a right to exact *coinmed* or refection from the tribes for themselves and their retinue. Columba, himself a poet and probably a member of the



Bardic Fraternity, naturally sympathized with them. Dallan Forgaill tells us that the influence of Columba 'stayed the poets', he having praised their profession to King Aedh. The sentence of banishment was revoked on condition that the right to exact refection was amended, and the retinue reduced to twenty-four for each head poet and twelve for each minor poet. By this the Bards lost much of their early importance, but they were saved from extinction, and a great national Irish institution was preserved. The Bards 'continued for centuries to perambulate the country, to praise or satirize kings, lords, and squires, farmers and ecclesiastics, till, in the present reign (Victoria's), their last representatives were reduced, in the general ruin of the literature of Ireland, to a chair by the kitchen fire in winter, and a meal on the doorstep in summer.' (Norman Moore.)

#### AMHRA COLUMKILLE: THE PRAISE OF COLUMBA.

Dallan Forgaill, as chief of all the Bards, expressed his and their gratitude to St. Columba by composing in his praise and honour the *Amhra Columkille*, a poem which was held in the utmost reverence in Ireland for centuries.

The high estimation in which Columba was held by the Bards is shown by a passage in the *Amhra*, in which Dallan tells us that the twelve hundred poets who were at the Convention, when they came into the assembly brought with them a poem of praise for him, that they sang it with music and

chorus, 'and a surpassing music it was'—so impressive, apparently, that the Saint himself felt sudden emotions of complacency and gave way to vanity. Baithene, one of his companions, who was standing by, beheld a great troop of scoffing demons in the sky above. He directed Columba's attention to them. The Saint, smitten to the heart, covered his head with his cowl and did penance. The demons fled. But Columba forbade his praises to be further produced or published, adding that no one should be praised in a life which might end badly, that he alone who had run well and ended his race successfully should be praised after death. 'And Columbkille promised to Dallan the gifts and products of the earth for this praising : but he took not them, but heaven, for himself, and for every one who would recite it each day, and would understand it between sense and sound. As a certain one said :

Columb's Amhra—every day  
 Whoever will recite it completely  
 Will reach the good bright kingdom  
 Which God granted to Dallan.'

#### THE MOTHER COUNTRY AND HER COLONY

The third object of Columba in attending the Convention of Drumceatt was the future of Dalriada, the Irish Colony in North Britain, and how far the colony, now that Columba had ordained Aidan as king over it, should be made independent of the mother country. 'As a colony or subject

state', says Dr. Skene, 'it was liable to the same burdens as were exacted from all the petty principalities in Ireland. These consisted in the payment of certain rents and tributes known as *cain* and *cobach*, and certain military services which consisted of what was called *fecht*, or the obligation of joining the superior king in expeditions, and *sloged*, or "hosting", taking part in the general levy of the country for war.' Columba assigned to Colman, son of Comgellan, who accompanied him to the Convention, the duty of delivering the judgment between the men of Erin and the men of Alba. And Colman delivered it thus: The expeditions and hostings to be with the men of Erin always, for 'hostings' always belong to the parent stock. Their tributes and gains and shipping to be with the men of Alba. And when one of the men of Erin or Alba should come from the East, the Dalriada to entertain them, whether few or many, and the Dalriada to convey them on if they require it. Thus the colony was freed from all tribute to the supreme king of Ireland, but was to join in expeditions or 'hostings', with the exception of maritime expeditions; King Aidan of Dalriada became independent, and his country was no longer a subject state to Ireland. It is probable that when Columba returned to Iona he obtained from his friend, King Brude, a recognition of Aidan as an independent king. The results of this treaty were great. Ireland and her great colony in Britain were pledged to mutual assistance against Saxon, Dane, and Norseman, an alliance which continued

for centuries, and a friendship was cemented between the Saints and scholars of Erin and Alba. Irish missionaries aided in developing the institutions of the colony, and in conveying the blessings of religion to every portion of northern Britain and the northern provinces of the English.

A.D. c. 579. THE BATTLE OF COLERAINE.

In 577 died St. Brendan of Clonfert, who had often visited the islands and had been a guest of St. Columba in his monastery of Hinba [Eileanna-Naoimh, one of the Garvelloch islands off the coast of Argyle], with three other Abbots, as related by Adamnan, Book II. ch. xvii. ; and in 579 St. Finnian, of Movice, one of St. Columba's early preceptors, was lost to him by death.

It was in about that year, 579, that a controversy arose between St. Columba and St. Comgall about the church of Ross-Torathair, near Coleraine. The dispute was taken up by their respective clans, the Hy Neill of St. Columba and the Dal-Araidhe of St. Comgall, and a battle—the battle of Cul-Rathain (Coleraine)—was fought. Dr. Reeves says it is very possible that some collision did take place between the Saints about jurisdiction, as St. Comgall's abbey church of Camus was close to Coleraine, and St. Columba is recorded to have been occasionally in that neighbourhood (as in Adamnan, Book I. ch. l.), and besides, the territory west of Coleraine was the debateable ground between the two clans. It is not known which was victorious in the fight.

## A.D. c. 585. COLUMBA AGAIN IN IRELAND.

It was in about the year 585 that, as Adamnan tells us, Columba visited the monasteries of Durrow, his own foundation of 553, and St. Kieran's monastery of Clonmacnoise, which afterwards rose to the highest importance as a seat of religion and culture in Ireland.

## A.D. 587. THE BATTLE OF CUILFEDHA.

In 587 there was a third battle in Ireland, in which St. Columba was also concerned, and about which an ancient verse is quoted in the annals :

Broken was, as has ben told,  
For Colum's sake, in the famous battle  
The bestower of jewels.

The battle fought at Cuilfedha, near Clonard, was between the northern and southern branches of the Hy-Neill. The cause of it is thus given in Keating's *History* (1629): 'This was the cause that occasioned the fighting of the battle of Cuil Feadha [by Aedh] against Colman Mac Diarmada, namely, in revenge for his having been outraged in the case of Baodan, son of Finneadh, King of Erin, who was killed by Cuimin, son of Colman, at Leim-an-eich, in violation of the sanctuary of Colum.' Aedh was the victor in the battle, and Colman, his adversary, was slain, with five thousand of his men.

## THE 'ALTUS' OF COLUMBA.

Now with regard to these three battles in which Columba is said to have been concerned—namely, Cul-Dreimhne in 561, Coleraine in 577, and Cuilfedha in 587—there is in existence partly preserved in the ancient manuscript the *Leabhar Breac*—‘the Speckled Book’—a fine hymn composed by St. Columba known from its opening words as the ‘Altus’ of Columba. The preface to the hymn, which is in a mixture of Latin and Irish, gives two different accounts of the circumstances under which the hymn was written: ‘The cause was because he was desirous of praising God. For seven years he was searching out this Hymn in the Black Cell (the Dubh regles, Columba’s church in Derry) without light—that is, *beseeking forgiveness for the battle of Cuil Dremhne which he had gained over Diarmait son of Cerball* [King of Ireland, 544–65], *and the other battles that were gained on his account.*’ According to the other, but not so probable, version, the hymn was composed in Iona while Columba was carrying corn to the mill and watching its grinding. The tradition is a constant one that the strife and bloodshed of Cuil Dremhne had something to do with Columba’s leaving Ireland. Dr. Reeves, in speaking of the martial propensities of St. Columba, reminds us that we must bear in mind the complexion of the times in which he lived and the peculiar condition of society in his day, which required even women to enter battle and justified ecclesiastics in the

occasional exercise of warfare. It was not till the year 804 that the monastic communities of Ireland were formally exempted from military service, though Columba himself, and Adamnan after him, brought about the emancipation of women from the obligation to fight alongside of their husbands and sons. If we may judge from the biographical records which have descended to us, says Dr. Reeves, primitive Irish ecclesiastics, and especially the superior class, were very impatient of contradiction and very resentful of injury. Giraldus Cambrensis, who went to Ireland in 1185 as secretary to Prince John, son of Henry II., and collected there the materials for his *Topography of Ireland*, devotes one of his chapters to the irascibility of the Irish in general and their Saints in particular, and he accounts for it from the fact that, as there were no great castles in the land, the churches were fortified and served as places of refuge from the bands of marauders of which the country was full. 'By Divine Providence', says Giraldus, 'there was frequent need that the Church should visit her enemies with the severest chastisements, this being the only mode by which evil-doers and impious men could be deterred from breaking the peace of ecclesiastical societies.' St. Columba, it must always be remembered, was a man of royal birth, and naturally could not accept injuries or affronts in silence; allied as he was to the leaders in the three battles, and interested in the result of their fighting, it could not be expected in a country where civil faction was, so to

speak, a part of its very constitution that Columba could look on with indifference. He was not only Abbot, but also Statesman.

So much, then, for Columba's connection with the military events of his life. As to what manner of man he was as Abbot and Saint, a fairly complete idea can be obtained from the narrative of Adamnan, and particularly from the latter part of his Second Preface, while in the 'Lives of the Saints,' given by Colgan in the *Acta Sanctorum*, are many other details which are an additional evidence of his piety and holiness. He would bathe the feet of the Brethren after their daily labour, he would carry the bags of flour from the mill to the kitchen, he subjected himself to great austerities, sleeping on a hide spread on the ground, with a stone for pillow, most strict and constant in fasting, in prayer, in meditation.

#### ST. COLUMBA AS BARD.

St. Adamnan mentions in his biography that St. Columba spent much of his time in writing—that is, transcribing the Scriptures and the Psalter. It is stated also in the Old Irish Life of the Saint that he transcribed 'three hundred splendid, lasting books', and if the famous manuscripts—the 'Cathach', a Psalter (in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy), and the 'Book of Durrow,' the Gospels (in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin)—be, as many think, the work of Columba himself, the epithets 'splendid and lasting' are



amply justified. But St. Columba was not, like most monks, a transcriber of the Scriptures only, he was, as has already been said, a poet, and in all probability a member of the Order of Bards :—

Thrice fifty noble lays the apostle made  
Whose miracles are more numerous than grass ;  
Some in Latin which were beguiling,  
Some in Gaelic, fair the tale.

That is the Saint's literary record as handed down in the Old Irish Life ; but of all these poems only a few have come down to us which can with any likelihood be assigned to St. Columba. There are attributed to him three Latin hymns—'Altus Prosator,' 'In te Christe,' and 'Noli Pater'—each of which is accompanied by a preface in Irish and Latin describing the circumstances under which it was written. All were printed in his *Acta Sanctorum*, by Colgan (1645), and they were reprinted and edited by Dr. J. H. Todd for the Irish Archæological and Celtic Society (1869). The original manuscript used by Colgan is at St. Isidore's in Rome, and there is another manuscript, the one used by Dr. Todd, the *Liber Hymnorum*, in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin. The 'Altus' is also found in the fifteenth-century manuscript, the *Leabhar Breac*, the 'Speckled Book', in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, and it has been edited, with a prose translation, by the late Marquess of Bute. Dr. Todd says of the 'Altus ; that 'there cannot be a doubt that the Hymn is of considerable antiquity, and that it is Irish. It

quotes in many places a Latin Version of the Scriptures *older* than the recension of St. Jerome [the Vulgate]. It is written in a barbaric style, with many words of rare occurrence, some of them unknown even to the researches of Du Cange.' The authorship of the poem, as the Marquess of Bute observes, is ascribed by an apparently unbroken tradition to Columba, and does not seem open to any serious doubt; it may be held to be confirmed, he says, by what little internal evidence the poem offers; and as regards its intrinsic merits, he thinks that portions of it would not suffer by comparison with the grand 'Dies Iræ' of Thomas of Celano, the friend and biographer of St. Francis of Assisi. Here, by way of example and comparison, are two of the stanzas of the 'Altus' done in prose:—

The Day of the King of Kings most righteous is at hand, the Day of the Lord, the Day of Wrath and Vengeance, of darkness and clouds, and a Day of thunderings mighty and loud, a Day of distress, of lamentation and sorrow, in which shall cease the love and desire of women and the strife of men and the lust of this world.

We shall be standing trembling before the Tribunal of the Lord, and we shall give an account of all our deeds, beholding also our crimes set before our eyes, and the Books of Conscience laid open before our faces. Into most bitter weeping and sobbing shall we break forth—having no longer the wherewithal to work.

Having no longer the wherewithal to work! There surely is a touch of Columba, of whom Adamnan says that he could not bear to be idle. 'He could not pass the space even of a single hour without applying himself either to prayer, or reading, or writing, or else to some manual labour.' Besides these Latin hymns, there are various ancient poems in his own native Irish tongue ascribed to St. Columba. Four are given by Dr. Reeves in Irish and English: 'The Dialogue of Columkille and Cormac in Hy (Iona), after escaping from the Coire Breacain (the dangerous channel between Ballycastle and Rathlin Island), and after searching the boundless ocean until he reached the Cold Region (the Arctic Circle)', as told in the Voyage of Cormac, Adamnan II. ch. xlii.; and another, 'The Song of Columkille when Cormac came to him from his own country'; another, a song of Columkille, 'It were delightful, O Son of my God'; and a fourth on the occasion of his departure from Durrow for the last time, 'Beloved the excellent seven.' Besides, there are printed Columba's 'Farewell to Aran' (*Transactions of the Gaelic Society, Dublin, 1808*), and one said to have been written on his flight from King Diarmait (*Miscellany of the Irish Archæological Society*). Besides these printed poems, there are poems bearing Columba's name in one of the O'Clery Manuscripts in the Burgundian Library at Brussels, and a large collection in the manuscript entitled 'Laud 615' in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Of this last collection, Dr. Reeves says that it comprises everything in

the shape of poem or fragment that could be called Columba's which industry was able to scrape together in the middle of the sixteenth century. Finally must be mentioned the Rule of St. Columba, of which the manuscript exists in the Burgundian Library of Brussels, but which is not really a systematic Rule like St. Benedict's, but rather a collection of maxims, by some later Columban monk for the use of hermits.

#### HIS GRACE—HIS SOUL—HIS BODY.

In that same precious Old Irish Life of St. Columba, handed down to us in the Leabhar Breac, and held in high esteem by all Irishmen from the day it was written, a thousand years ago, there are quoted the following lines upon St. Columba, made by St. Brechan:—

His grace in Hii (Iona) without stain,  
And his soul in Derry ;  
And his body under the flagstone  
Under which are Brigid and Patrick.

In those three places—Iona, Derry, and Down—the author of the Old Life goes on to say, is the 'full habitation' of Columkille.

To Iona he gives his 'stainless grace'—Iona the remote isle of the British Sea, to which he sailed from his dearly loved Erin 'to preach the word of God to the men of Alba and to the Britons and to the Saxons.'

To Derry, his soul—Derry, the 'Oak Grove', where, in the year 546, he founded in God's honour

his best-loved church, 'for he loved that city very much', says the old biographer, 'as he said :—

“ The reason why I love Derry is  
For its quietness, its purity,  
For 'tis full of angels white  
From one end to the other.”

His body—under the flagstone with St. Patrick and St. Brigid, at Down, where for many centuries rested the three great Saints of Ireland—the holy three, of whom the triple-leaved shamrock is the national and spiritual symbol—until Lord Grey, Deputy-Governor of Ireland in 1536–7, in his zeal for the establishing of Henry VIII as head of the Church, and for the destruction of religious houses, gave the ancient church of Down to the flames. 'He rode to the north', says Holinshead, 'and in this journey he razed Saint Patrick, his church in Downe, and burnt the monuments of Patrick, Brigide, and Colme (Columba), who are said to have been there interred. . . . This fact lost him sundry hearts in that country, always after detesting the King and Council.' Grey was eventually arraigned and tried in London. Among the articles cited against him was this one: 'Item: That without any warrant from the King or Council he profaned the church of St. Patrick in Down, turning it to a stable; after plucked it down and shipped the notable ring of bells that did hang in the steeple, meaning to have sent them to England.' Grey perished by the headsman's axe on Tower Hill in 1541.

## THE 'FULL HABITATION' OF COLUMBA.

Not one stone upon another remains of Columba's church of Derry, 'my Derry', as he called it :—

My Derry, my little Oak Grove,  
My dwelling, and my little cell.

Not a trace remains of the humble buildings, whether of timber and wattle, or of dry-piled stone of his monastery of Iona. No longer can be seen at Down the shrines of the three great Saints of Ireland. Yet has Columba his 'full habitation'; what Adamnan says of him is still true: 'Though he lived in this small and remote island of the British Sea, his name has not only become illustrious throughout the whole of our own Ireland and Britain, but has reached even to triangular Spain, and to Gaul, and to Italy, which lies beyond the Pennine Alps, and also to the city of Rome itself, the head of all cities.' Aye! and further, much further has this 'great and honourable celebrity' extended, passing over vast oceans to islands and continents of which the good Abbot never dreamed.

But it is to Iona, that standpoint from which, facing to the north, he declared to the heathen the Gospel of the Lord, that we turn with the greatest affection and reverence—Iona, where Columba 'set up his everlasting rest', from which he sent back to Ireland a messenger bearing his benediction :—

Carry with thee, thou noble youth,  
 My blessing and my benediction,  
 One half upon Erin, sevenfold,  
 And half on Alba.  
 Take my blessing with thee to the West ;  
 Broken is my heart in my breast ;  
 Should sudden death overtake me  
 It is from my great love of the Gaedhil ;  
 Gaedhil ! Gaedhil ! beloved name !

‘And there was not born of the Gaedhil’, says the old biographer, ‘a being more illustrious, or more wise, or of better family than Columkille. There came not of them any person who was more modest, more humble, or more lowly.’

What wonder that wherever Gael or Briton dwelt the name of this, one of the greatest of their race, is revered, Columkille—‘The Dove of the Churches’: that to that name they should have added many other endearing epithets : ‘The Precious Gem’, ‘The Royal Bright Star’, ‘The Wise’, ‘The Meek’, ‘The Self-denying’, ‘The Divine Branch, who was in the yoke of the Pure Mysteries of God’?

What wonder that the people of the far Hebridean islands of Barra and South Uist, men, women, and children, who still hold the faith Columba held, to this day invoke his aid, and the aid of Mary and Michael, in their annual Shealing Hymn :—

Thou, gentle Michael of the white steed,  
 Who subdued the Dragon of blood,

For love of God and the Son of Mary  
 Spread over us thy wing, shield us all !  
 Spread over us thy wing, shield us all !

Mary, beloved ! Mother of the White Lamb,  
 Protect us, thou Virgin of nobleness,  
 Queen of beauty ! Shepherdess of the flocks !  
 Keep our cattle, surround us together,  
 Keep our cattle, surround us together.

Thou Columkille, the friendly, the kind,  
 In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit  
     Holy,  
 Through the Three-in-One, through the Three,  
 Encompass us, guard our procession,  
 Encompass us, guard our procession.

Thou Father ! Thou Son ! Thou Spirit Holy !  
 Be the Three-One with us day and night,  
 On the machair plain, on the mountain ridge,  
 The Three-One is with us, with His arm around our  
     head,  
 The Three-One is with us, with His arm around our  
     head.

But the boatmen of Barray sing for the last verse :—

Thou Father ! Thou Son ! Thou Spirit Holy !  
 Be the Three-One with us day and night,  
 And on the crested wave, or on the mountain side,  
 Our Mother is there, and Her arm is under our head.  
 Our Mother is there, and Her arm is under our head.\*

W. H.

\* This beautiful folk-song is given, with others, in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Crofters of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1884, in an Appendix by Mr. Alexander Carmichael, page 451.



## ST. ADAMNAN

A few words, now, as to St. Adamnan, whose *Life of St. Columba* is herewith submitted in a new translation. He was born in 624, twenty-seven years after the death of Columba, in south-western Donegal, descended from Sedna, an uncle of Columba, and was brought up in the monastic schools, and became a monk under his kinsman, Seghine, Abbot of Iona. In 679, in his fifty-fifth year, Adamnan succeeded to the chair of St. Columba, and to him there came as a refugee the English Prince Aldfrith, who was called the foster-son, or *alumnus*, of Adamnan. When, eventually, Aldfrith came to the throne of Northumbria, Adamnan visited his court—as he tells us in the ensuing narrative—and presented to him his book *De Locis Sanctis*—‘Upon the Holy Places.’ Adamnan was in Ireland in 692, and again in 697, on ecclesiastical and political business, and the Rath and Cross at Tara known by his name are supposed to be connected with his second visit. It is thought that he wrote the *Life of St. Columba* between the two visits. Adamnan seems to have remained in Ireland until 704, in which year he returned to his monastery in Iona, and there, soon after, he died.

Of his principal work, the *Life of St. Columba*, Dr. Reeves has summed up all that can be said against it from the point of view of style, especially the 'artificial interweaving of words in long sentences, and the oft-recurring ablative absolute in awkward positions, the inflection of proper names according to the rules of Irish and not Latin grammar', with other singularities. In fact, as the Rev. George Cormack, to whose kind assistance in preparing this volume I have already referred, expresses it, Adamnan *thought* in Gaelic and *wrote* in Latin. Apart from style, it is easy to collect from many sources the praises of the *Life of Columba*. Montalembert calls it 'one of the most living, most attractive, and most authentic monuments of Christian history'; Bishop Forbes describes it as 'the solitary record of the history of the Church of Scotland'; Pinkerton thinks it 'the most complete piece of such biography that all Europe can boast of, not only at so early a period, but throughout the Middle Ages'; Fowler ranks it with Bede's *St. Cuthbert*, Edduis's *St. Wilfred*, and Jonas's *St. Columbanus*, as one of the most interesting and valuable early biographies extant. Dr. Reeves considers it one of the most important pieces of hagiology in existence; the Duke of Argyle says that in it is to be found 'not only the firm foothold of history, but the vivid portraiture of an individual man. Not one historical character of time is in any similar degree known to us.'

Adamnan's work is in three books, to the first of which there are two Prefaces. The first book is

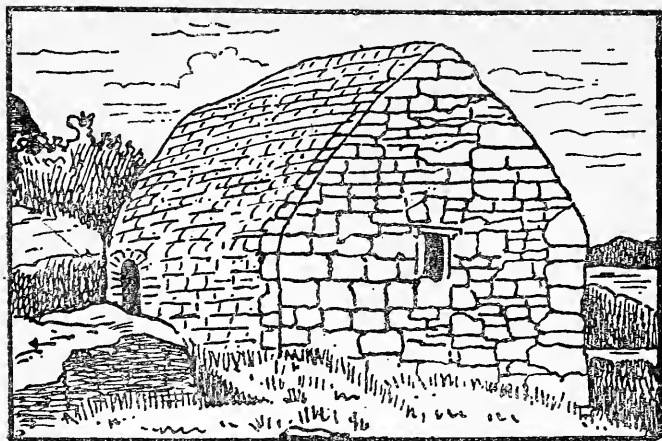
upon the Saint's Prophetic Revelations, the Second upon his Miracles, the third, up to the twenty-third chapter, upon Angelic Visitations, and in the twenty-third chapter we have to the end one of the most exquisite pieces of pure biography ever written, not to be surpassed, indeed, in the whole range of ancient biography—simple, dignified, pathetic—a very gem of literature.

W. H.

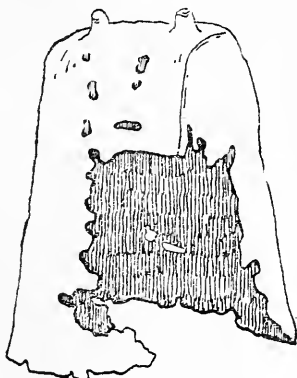


ADAMNAN'S SAINT COLUMBA

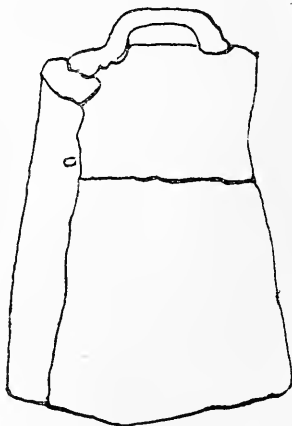
BOOK I



ANCIENT ORATORY ON THE ISLAND OF INCHCOLM, FIRTH OF FORTH



BELL OF SAINT COLUMBA  
(SEE BOOK I. CHAP. VIII.)



BELL OF SAINT PATRICK  
(SEE BOOK I. CHAP. VIII.)

# THE LIFE OF SAINT COLUMBA

IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, THE PREFACE BEGINS :

Wishing to fall in with the urgent demands of the Brethren, and being about to write, with Christ's help, the life of our Blessed Patron, I shall have a care, firstly, to warn those who may read it, that they should give credit to the facts therein recorded, and attend to the matter rather than to the words, which, as I think, seem uncultured and rude. And let them remember that the Kingdom of God consists not in exuberance of eloquence, but in the abundant blossoming forth of faith ; and let them not, because of some obscure names of men or tribes or places in the barbarous Irish tongue (which, as I think, sounds harsh compared with various languages of foreign nations), despise a record of deeds, useful to us, and done not without God's help.

Further, we have thought to warn the reader of this also : that many other things concerning this

man of blessed memory, even things worthy of remembrance, have been omitted by us for the sake of brevity; and in order to avoid wearying our readers a few only out of many have been recorded here. And this, as I think, every one who reads these will perhaps note, that of the great deeds of the same blessed man, fame has disseminated amongst the people's those which are the least important, as compared with these few which we are now arranging to set briefly down.

Hence, after this first little Preface, I shall, in the opening of my second one, begin, with God's help, to give an account of our prelate's name.

#### NOTE

*“The barbarous Irish tongue”*

Adamnan thinks it necessary, as did many other writers, Celtic and Saxon, to apologise for the uncouthness of his mother tongue when used in connection with Latin.

### IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

#### THE SECOND PREFACE

He was a man of venerable life and of blessed memory, father and founder of monasteries, having the same name as Jonas, the prophet, for, though differing in sound of the three different languages, it means one and the same thing; what in Hebrew is pronounced IONA, in Greek is uttered PERISTERA and in the Latin tongue is called COLUMBA. Such and so great a name was



not given, it is believed, to the man of God without a Divine providence. For also according to the faith of the Gospels the Holy Ghost is shown to have descended on the Only Begotten of the Eternal Father in the form of that little bird which is called columba (dove): hence for the most part in the sacred Books the dove is meant mystically to signify the Holy Spirit. Accordingly the Saviour also in His Gospel instructed His disciples that they should preserve the simplicity of the dove abiding in a pure heart; for the dove is a simple and innocent bird. Meet, therefore, was it that the simple and innocent man, who by his dove-like ways made in himself a dwelling-place for the Holy Spirit, should be called by that name, a name to which not unfitly corresponds that which is written in the Proverbs: "Better is a good name than much riches."

Not undeservedly, therefore, was this our prelate, by God's gift, adorned and endowed with this proper name from the days of his childhood, but even many years before the day of his birth he was like a child of promise so named in wonderful and prophetic way, as revealed to a certain soldier of Christ by revelation of the Holy Ghost. For a certain British pilgrim, a holy man, a disciple of the holy bishop Patrick, Mochta by name, thus prophesied concerning our Patron, as has been told us on the testimony of experienced men of old. "In the last ages of the world", he says, "a son is to be born whose name, Columba, shall be spread abroad, known through all the provinces of the

Isles of the ocean, and he shall shed lustre upon the last ages of the world. The little fields of our two small monasteries shall be separated by the space of one little hedge; a man very dear to God and of great merit in His sight."

Describing, therefore, the life and character of this our Columba, I shall, in the first place, narrowly compress it in a short discourse, and at the same time set before the reader's eyes his holy conversation. But I will also briefly set forth some of his miracles, to be, as it were, eagerly foretasted by those who read; these, however, will be more fully detailed, divided into three books. And of these the first will contain Prophetic Revelations; the second Divine Miracles performed by him; the third will contain Angelic Apparitions and certain Manifestations of heavenly brightness upon the man of God. Let no one, therefore, consider me as either lying about this so renowned a man, or as writing things doubtful or uncertain; but be it known that I shall tell those things which have been handed down in the consistent record of our elders and of faithful experienced men, and that I shall write without any ambiguity; and this either from what we have been able to find was committed to writing before our time, or from what we, diligently inquiring, have learned by hearing from certain experienced and faithful ancients who told them to us without any misgiving.

Saint Columba, then, was born of noble parentage; his father was Fedilmith, son of Fergus, and his mother was Aethne by name, whose father

may be called in Latin, *Filius Navis* (son of Nave), but in the Irish tongue, *MacNave*.

In the second year after the battle of Culedrebina (Cooldrevny) and in the forty-second of his age, wishing to make a pilgrimage for Christ from Ireland to Britain, he sailed forth. And he, who, even from boyhood had been devoted to the school of Christ and to the study of wisdom, preserving by the gift of God integrity of body and purity of soul, showed that although placed upon earth he was fitted for a heavenly life. For he was angelic of aspect, clean in speech, holy in deed, of excellent disposition, great in counsel, for thirty-four years trained as an Island-soldier (of Christ). He could not pass the space even of a single hour without applying himself either to prayer, or reading, or writing, or also to some manual labour. By day and by night he was so occupied, without any intermission, in unwearied exercises of fasts and vigils that the burden of any one of these particular labours might seem to be beyond human endurance. And, amid all, dear to all, ever showing a pleasant, holy countenance, he was gladdened in his inmost heart by the joy of the Holy Spirit.

#### NOTES

##### *Iona: Peristera: Columba*

The Hebrew *Iona*, a dove, is the proper name of the prophet Jonah. St. Columbanus (543-615) when he landed in Gaul (c. 584-5) and was asked what he was, replied: "I am an Irish pilgrim, and my speech and action correspond to my name, which is in Hebrew *Iona*, in Greek *Peristera*, and in Latin *Columba*, a dove."

*“A certain British pilgrim . . . Mochta by name”*

This was St. Mochta of Lughmagh, or Louth, commemorated in the Calendar on August 19th. He was “ortus ex Britannia”—of British origin; and landed at Omeath in the county of Louth with twelve followers. Hence his title of “proselytus”, a new-comer.

*“Of noble parents”*

Columba's paternal ancestor was Niall, King of Ireland, A.D. 379-405, and his maternal ancestor Echin, seventh in descent from Cathaer Mor, King of Ireland, A.D. 120.

*The Battle of Cooldrevny*

Fought in 561.

HERE BEGINS THE TEXT OF THE FIRST  
BOOK,  
CONCERNING HIS PROPHETIC  
REVELATIONS.

I

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF HIS MIRACULOUS  
POWERS.

And so, according to our promise given above, there are to be briefly set forth in this book, in the first place, such proofs of his miraculous powers as this venerable man gave. For in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by the virtue of his prayers, he cured men suffering from the attacks of various diseases ; and he alone, God helping, drove out from this our Island (Iona) which now has the Primacy, malignant and innumerable hosts of demons, warring against him, seen by bodily eyes and beginning to bring deadly diseases upon his Monastic Society. By Christ's help he repressed the furious rage of wild beasts partly by striking them dead, partly by boldly repelling them.

The swellings of the waves, also, rising sometimes mountains high in a great storm, were soon quieted and brought low at his prayer, and his ship in which at that time he happened to be sailing was brought to the wished-for haven in a perfect calm. When

staying for some days in the country of the Picts, on returning thence he hoisted his sail against a contrary wind to confound the Druids, and so his ship, scudding over the sea, made as quick a voyage as if he had had a favourable breeze. And on other occasions winds that were contrary for sailors were turned into favourable ones at his prayer.

In that same region above mentioned, he took a white stone from a river and blessed it for the working of certain cures, and this stone on being dropped into water, contrary to nature, floated on the surface like an apple. This divine miracle was done in the presence of King Brude and his household. And, what is a still greater miracle, in the same province also he raised the dead son of a certain countryman, a believer, and restored him, living and unhurt, to his father and mother.

At another time, the same blessed man, then a young deacon residing in Ireland with Finbarr, a holy bishop, when the wine necessary for the Holy Mysteries (the Mass) failed, turned plain water into true wine by the power of prayer.

But, further, a great light of heavenly brilliancy was sometimes seen by some of the brethren to be shed upon him on different and separate occasions, both in the darkness of night and in daylight. He merited also delightful, most sweet and luminous visits of holy angels.

By the revelation of the Holy Ghost he often saw the souls of certain righteous men borne by angels to the highest heavens ; but many a time

also and very often he saw other souls of reprobrates borne by demons to hell.

Many a time did he foretell the future deserts of many while yet living in mortal flesh ; the joys of some, the woes of others. In the dreadful crash of battle he also obtained this from God by the virtue of his prayers : that some kings should be vanquished, and other rulers should come off victors. And not only whilst he was in this present life, but also after his passing out of the flesh was this kind of favour vouchsafed to him, as to some victorious and most brave champion, by God Who does honour to all the saints.

Of such honour as this, conferred from above by the Almighty upon the honourable man, we will just give one example which was manifested in favour of Oswald, the Saxon king, the day before he fought with Catlon (Cadwallon), the most valiant king of the Britons. For when the same King Oswald had pitched his camp in readiness for battle, one day, while asleep on a pillow in his tent, he sees St. Columba in a vision gleaming with angelic beauty, and his lofty figure seemed to touch the clouds with the crown of his head. And this blessed man, revealing his own name to the king standing in the midst of the camp, covered the same camp, except one small distant spot, with his shining garment, and uttered these encouraging words, the same, namely, which the Lord spake to Jesue Ben Nun [Joshua the son of Nun] before the passage of the Jordan, after the death of Moses, saying : “ Be of a good courage ; lo ! I will be with

thee", etc. St. Columba, therefore, speaking these words to the king in the vision, adds: "Go forth from the camp to battle this very night, for this time the Lord has granted to me that thine enemies shall be put to flight, and thy foe, Catlon, delivered into thine hands, and that after the battle thou shalt come back victor, and that thou shalt reign happily." The king, waking up after these words, narrates this vision to his assembled council; and all encouraged by it, the whole people promise to believe and to receive baptism after their return from the battle: for up to that time all that Saxon land [Northumbria] had been wrapt in the darkness of heathendom and ignorance, except King Oswald himself, with twelve men, who were baptized with him what time he was in exile among the Irish. What more need I say? On that very same night King Oswald, as he had been directed in the vision, goes forth from the camp to battle against many thousands, with an army much smaller, and obtains from the Lord, as it had been promised him, a happy and easy victory; and, having slain King Catlon, returning victor from the battle, he was afterwards established by God as the imperator (overlord, Bretwalda) of all Britain. My predecessor, our Abbot Failbeus, related this narrative to me, Adamnan, nothing doubting, and he declared that he had heard it from the mouth of King Oswald himself as he related this same vision to Seghine, the Abbot.

But this also seems a fact not to be passed by: that by certain hymns in the Irish tongue



in praise of the same blessed man and the commemoration of his name, certain persons, though they were wicked men of lewd conversation and bloodthirsty, in the very night in which they had been singing the same hymns, were freed from the hands of their enemies who had surrounded the house of the same singers ; and they escaped unhurt between the flames and the swords and the spears ; and strange to tell, a few of those who, as though making light of those memorials of the holy man, would not sing the hymns, were the only ones who perished in that attack of their enemies. Not two or three witnesses, according to law, of this miracle, but even a hundred, and more than that, could be brought forward. And not in one place or at one time only is this same thing proved to have happened, but even at different times and places in Ireland and Britain, by a like kind of deliverance and for a similar cause, has it been found without doubt to have been done. We have learned these things, nothing doubting, from well-informed men of each district where by a similar miracle the same thing happened.

But to return now to the main point : Among those miracles which the same man of the Lord, while dwelling in mortal flesh, wrought by the gift of God, was that from his youthful years he began also to excel in the spirit of prophecy, to foretell things to come, to announce to those who were present things that were happening at a distance ; for, though absent in body yet present in spirit, he could perceive things done far away ; for according

to the word of St. Paul, "He who cleaveth unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Whence also this same man of the Lord, St. Columba—as he himself did not deny to some few Brethren who sometimes inquired concerning this matter—in some contemplations of Divine grace, beheld even the whole world as though collected in one ray of the sun, laid open to his sight, the capacity of his mind being miraculously enlarged. These things concerning the miraculous powers of the holy man are here narrated in order that the eager reader may, in the things thus briefly written, have, as it were, a foretaste of sweeter feasts to come, and these indeed, the Lord helping, shall be more fully told in the three following books.

It seems to me, now, not unfitting that I should relate—though not in their proper order—the prophecies which the blessed man made at various times regarding certain holy and illustrious men.

#### NOTES

##### *This our island Iona which now has the Primacy*

Bede in his "Ecclesiastical History," iii. 4, says: "Before he (Columba) passed over into Britain he had built a noble monastery in Ireland called Dearn-ach, the Field of Oaks (Derry)", and from this and the monastery of Candida Casa (Whitherne, Galloway) "many others had their beginning through his disciples, both in Britain and Ireland; but the monastery where his body lies (Iona) is the principal of them all."

##### *In the country of the Picts*

Pictland in Columba's time comprised almost all of what we now call Scotland, from the Firth of Forth

northwards. It was in the ninth year of Brude, King of the Picts, that St. Columba arrived in North Britain, A.D. 563. Brude reigned 554 to 584.

*To confound the Druids*

*Magi* is the word used by Adamnan, and it is so used to mean Druids in the "Acts of Irish Saints" by Colgan.

*Oswald*

King of Northumbria, 635-642.

*Catlon*

Cadwalla, or Cadwallon, king of the Britons of Strathclyde. The battle with Oswald, in which he was defeated and slain in 635, was fought at Heavenfield, near the Roman Wall and Hexham. It is one of the most famous in the early British and Saxon annals.

*Our Abbot Failbeus*

Eighth Abbot of Iona, 669-679.

*Seghine, the Abbot*

Fifth Abbot of Iona, 623-652.

*Certain hymns*

Probably the *Amhra Coluimcille*, or "Praises of St. Columba," by the bard Dallan Forghaill, still extant in choice (but very ancient and obscure) Irish. St. Columba had befriended the bards of Ireland who had become unpopular, and in 575 saved them from being abolished by the Convention of Drum Ceatt.

## II

CONCERNING ST. FINTAN, ABBOT, SON OF  
TAILCHAN.

St. Fintan, who afterwards, throughout all the churches of the Irish, was held a man of very high repute, keeping from his boyhood, God helping, purity of flesh and of spirit, devoted to studies of Divine wisdom, had it in his heart, while yet in his youthful years, that, leaving Ireland, he would set out and visit our holy Columba. Burning with that desire, he goes to a certain old man, a friend of his, a most wise and venerable cleric among his own people, who was called in Irish Columb Crag, so that he might hear from him, as from a wise man, some counsel. And when he had laid bare to him his thoughts on the matter, he received from him this answer: "Who can hinder this thy desire, devout and inspired, as I believe, by God, to sail across to St. Columba?" At the same hour there arrive by chance two monks of St. Columba, who, being questioned as to their travels, say: "Rowing over from Britain lately we have come to-day from the Oakwood of Calgach". "Is your holy father Columba well?" says Columb Crag. And they sorely weeping with great sorrow: "Well, indeed, is he, our patron, who, not many days ago, departed to Christ." Which hearing, Fintan and Columb and all who were there within, prostrate with their faces to the earth, wept bitterly. Fintan presently inquires, saying: "Whom has he left behind

him as successor?" "Baithene, his disciple," say they. And all crying out, "It is meet and due," Columb says to Fintan, "What now wilt thou do, Fintan?" Who, answering, says: "If the Lord will permit I will sail forth to Baithene, the holy and wise man, and if he will take me I will have him for Abbot." Then, next, having kissed the above-mentioned Columb and bidding him farewell, he prepares to sail, and, sailing across without any delay whatever, arrives at the Ionan Isle. And up to that time his name was not known in these parts; whence it happened that being at first hospitably received as some unknown guest, on another day he sends a messenger to Baithene wishing to have speech with him face to face. And he, as he was affable and pleasant to travellers, bids that he be brought to him; who, being at once brought, in the first place, as was right, prostrated himself on the ground on bended knees. And commanded by the holy elder he rises, and sitting down he is questioned by Baithene, who was not aware as yet of those things, concerning his nation and province, his name and manner of life, and for what reason he undertook the labour of a sea voyage. And he, thus questioned, tells all things in order, and humbly begs that he may be received. To whom the holy elder, having heard these things from his guest, and at once knowing him to be the man of whom St. Columba had prophetically spoken some time before, says, "I ought, indeed, to give my God thanks for thy coming hither, my son, but know thou this undoubtedly, that thou wilt

not be monk of ours." Hearing this the guest, very much saddened, says, "Perhaps, unworthy as I am, I do not deserve to become thy monk". The elder presently says : "I said not this, as thou sayest, that thou art unworthy ; but although I would rather keep thee with me, yet I cannot violate the command of my predecessor, the holy Columba, through whom the Holy Spirit prophesied concerning thee. For on a day, speaking to me alone and apart, with prophetic mouth, among other things thus he said : " O Baithene, thou shouldst hear very attentively these my words ; for immediately after my awaited and much desired passing from this world to Christ, a certain Brother from Ireland, who at this time regulates his youthful age by a good life, well versed in sacred studies, Fintan by name, of the tribe Mocu-moie, whose father is called Tailchan ; he, I say, coming to thee, will humbly beg that thou wilt receive him and wilt number him among the rest of thy monks. But it has not been predestined for him in the foreknowledge of God that he should himself become the monk of any Abbot, but he has long ago been chosen by God as an Abbot of monks and a leader of souls to the heavenly kingdom. Do not thou, therefore, retain this said man with thee in these our islands, lest thou shouldst seem also to go against the will of God : but apprising him of these words, send him back in peace to Ireland that he may erect a monastery in the parts of Leinster near the sea, and there feeding the flock of the sheep

of Christ let him lead numberless souls to the Heavenly Country". The younger holy man, hearing these things, shedding tears, gives thanks to Christ saying, "Be it unto me according to the prophetic and wondrous foreknowledge of the holy Columba". And in those same days, obeying the words of the Saints and receiving a blessing from Baithene, he sailed across to Ireland in peace.

I learned these things, nothing doubting, from a certain religious aged priest, a soldier of Christ, Oisseneus by name, son of Ernan, of the clan Mocu Neth Corb, who related them to me, and he bore witness that he had himself heard the above-mentioned words from the mouth of the same Saint Fintan, son of Tailchan, whose monk he had been.

#### NOTES

##### *St. Fintan*

Known also as Munna and Mundres. He was one of the monks at Iona. Died 635.

##### *Columb Crag*

Perhaps Colum, priest of Eanach (Enagh) near Derry.

##### *The Oakwood of Calgach*

"Roboretum Calgachi" in the text; the old name of Derry, which was afterwards changed to Daire Coluimcille. Derry was the most famous of Columba's monasteries in Ireland.

##### *Of the tribe (or clan) Mocumoie*

Perhaps Mac-Ua-Maan, the son of the grandson of Maan.

*In the parts of Leinster*

“In Laginensium finibus.” The Laginenses were the men of Laighen or Layn. With the Scandinavian addition of stadr, ster, a place, we get Laighen stadr, Laynstadr, Leinster.

*Oisseneus*

Perhaps an abbot of Clonard, who died 654.

*Mocu-Neth-Corb*

That is, Mac-U-Neth-corb, denoting that he was of the clan Ui-Niadh-corb. Mogh Corb was the ancestor of Cathair Mor, Hereditary King of Leinster, and of several famous Leinster saints.

## III

A PROPHECY OF ST. COLUMBA CONCERNING  
ERNENE, SON OF CRASEN.

At another time, the blessed man, while staying for some months in the midland part of Ireland, founding by Divine inspiration the monastery which is called in Irish Dair-Mag, was pleased to go to visit the Brethren who were dwelling in the Clonoensian monastery of St. Ceran (Clonmacnoise). And when they heard of his arrival, all of them from the little fields about the monastery, together with those who were found congregated within it, following with the greatest alacrity the Abbot Alither, set out with one accord, going outside the enclosure of the monastery to meet St. Columba as if he were an angel of the Lord; humbly bowing with faces to the earth at the sight of him, he was



kissed by them with all reverence, and singing hymns and praises they conduct him with all honour to the church. And binding together a canopy of poles they had it carried by four men, walking equally apart about the Saint as he went, lest, be it understood, the holy and aged Columba should be jostled by the crowding together of the throngs of Brethren. In the same hour a certain servant lad, very downcast in mien and attire, and not as yet pleasing to his elders, hiding himself as much as he could, came behind that he might secretly touch even the fringe of the cloak with which the blessed man was clad, and, if he could do so, without his knowing or feeling it. But nevertheless this was not hid from the Saint, for what he could not with his bodily eyes see done behind him he perceived with the eyes of his soul. Wherefore he stops suddenly, and stretching out his hand behind him takes hold of the boy's neck, and drawing him sets him in front of him. And while all those who are standing around say: "Send him away! send him away! Why dost thou detain this wretched and naughty lad?" the Saint, on the other hand, utters from his pure heart these prophetic words: "Suffer it to be, brethren, suffer it to be, now." But to the much trembling boy he says: "O son, open thy mouth and put out thy tongue." Then the boy, thus commanded, opening his mouth, with much trembling put out his tongue, and the Saint, stretching forth his holy hand, earnestly blessing it, thus prophetically speaks, saying: "Although this boy may now seem to you despicable and very

worthless, yet let no one despise him for that. For from this hour not only will he not displease you, but he will greatly please you ; and he will increase by degrees from day to day in good conduct and the virtues of the soul ; wisdom also and prudence shall be increased in him more and more from this day and great will be his progress in this your community ; his tongue also shall be gifted by God with wholesome doctrine and eloquence."

This was Ernene, son of Crasen, afterwards famous and very much noted among all the Churches of Ireland. And he it was who narrated all these above written words prophesied concerning himself to the Abbot Seghine, my predecessor ; Failbhe, who himself was also there present with Seghine, attentively listening the while, and from his (Failbhe's) account I have myself come to know all that I have stated.

But there are many other things which by the revelation of the Holy Ghost the Saint prophesied in those days when he was a guest in the Clonoensian monastery ; as, for instance, about that long-standing dissension which arose among the Churches of Ireland concerning the difference of the Feast of Easter and about certain visits made to him by Angels by whom certain places within the enclosures of the same monastery were at that time frequented.

## NOTES

*Ernene, son of Crasen*

St. Ernene, Ernin, or Mernocc, the form Mernocc being a contraction of Mo-Ernin-occ, "mo" meaning "my" and "occ" "little"; thus "my little Ernin" in affectionate familiarity. The form is preserved in Kilmarnock and Inchmarnock.

*Dair-Mag*

Now Durrow. Bede, in his "Ecclesiastical History," iii. 4, calls it Dearthach, in the language of the Scots [Irish]—that is, the Field of Oaks.

*Abbot Alither*

Fourth abbot of Clonmacnoise. Died 599.

*The Enclosure of the Monastery*

"Vallum monasterii": the outer defence, such as Bede describes as surrounding the monastic settlement of Lindisfarne. It is called *cashel* in Irish.

*Canopy of poles*

"Pyramidem de lignis": the word *pyramis* is used of the ciborium, or altar canopy, and also of the enclosing wall or fence round a building. Its meaning here is probably canopy.

*The discord which arose among the Churches*

This was the famous national controversy as to the proper date on which the Easter festival should be kept. The Roman Easter and the Roman form of tonsure, which was equally a subject of discord, were not accepted by the Celtic Church until the year 716.

## IV

CONCERNING THE COMING OF ST. CAINNECH, THE  
ABBOT, WHICH ST. COLUMBA PROPHETICALLY  
FORETOLD.

At another time when in the isle of Iona on a day of crashing tempest and terrible rising of the waves when the Saint, sitting in the house and directing the Brethren, said: "Make ready a lodging quickly, and draw forth water for the washing of the feet of guests", a certain Brother among them presently said: "Who, this very windy and most dangerous day, can safely sail across the Sound, though it be narrow?" And the Saint hearing this, thus speaks: "To a certain man, holy and chosen, who will come to us before evening, the Almighty has granted a calm, even in the storm." And behold on the same day a ship, for some time expected by the Brethren, in which was Cainnech, arrived, according to the prophecy of the Saint. And the Saint with the Brethren came to meet him and he was honourably and hospitably received by him. But those sailors who had been with Cainnech, when asked by the Brethren what sort of voyage they had had, replied just as St. Columba had before predicted, both as to the tempest and the calm, miraculously kept apart in the same sea and at the same time, God so granting, and they stated that they did not feel the tempest, which however they saw from afar.

## NOTES

*The Sound*

The strait between Iona and the Ross of Mull is about a mile across.

*Cainnech*

St. Cainnech, surnamed Mocu Dalon; in Scotland, called Kenneth; born 517, died 600; founder of Agaboe. The city of Kilkenny and the parish of Kilkenny West derive their names from him.

## V

CONCERNING THE DANGER TO THE HOLY BISHOP  
COLMAN MOCUSAILNI, IN THE SEA NEAR THE  
ISLAND CALLED RECHRU.

On another day also Saint Columba, residing in his mother church, suddenly smiling, broke out into these words saying: "Columban son of Beogna, just starting to sail over to us, is now in great danger in the rolling tides of the whirlpool of Breacan, and sitting at the prow, holds up both hands to heaven and also blesses that stormy and threatening sea; and yet the Lord is thus frightening him not that he is to be overwhelmed in the waves by the wreck of the ship in which he is sitting, but rather that he may be roused to pray more earnestly that, God being propitious, he may pass over to us after the danger is over.

## NOTES

*"Colman Mocusailni"*

i.e. Mac Ui Sailne, of the clan Dal Sailne, sometimes called Columbanus, as in the text. Born 555, died 611.

*“The island called Rechru”*

Now Rathlin, three miles off Fair Head on the coast of Antrim.

*The whirlpool of Breacan*

“Breacan’s Cauldron” in the channel between Ballycastle and Rathlin. Breacan, grandson of Niall of the Nine Hostages, was said to have been lost in it, hence its name.

## VI

## OF CORMAC.

At another time also, thus prophesying of Cormac, grandson of Lethan, certainly a holy man, who not less than three times laboriously sought a solitude in the ocean but did not find it, St. Columba prophesying said: “To day, once more desiring to find a solitude, Cormac is beginning to sail out from that region which, situated beyond the river Moy, is called Eirros Domno; yet will he not even this time find what he looks for; and this for no other fault of his than that he has taken with him on the voyage the monk of a certain religious abbot without his permission, a deserter, who ought not rightly to accompany him.”

## NOTES

*Cormac*

Abbot of Durrow, Cormac Ua Liathain (grandson of Lithain) of the Sea.

*A solitude*

A desert island. Cormac was an anchorite as well as abbot.

*The River Moy*

Irish, Muaidhe ; in Sligo.

*Eirros Domno*

In Irish, Iorris Domhnanu, Erris of the Damnonii. Erris, in County Mayo.

## VII

PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING  
THE DIN OF BATTLES FOUGHT AT A DISTANCE.

Two years having passed after the battle of Cule-Drebene [in 563, therefore], as it has been told to us, at the time when the blessed man first sailed away to leave Ireland ; on a certain day—that is, at the same hour in which was fought in Ireland the battle called in Irish of Ondemone, the same man of God then living in Britain, narrated before King Conall, son of Comgill, everything as well about the battle fought as also about those kings to whom the Lord granted victory over their enemies, whose proper names are Ainmores son of Setna and Domhnall and Forcus, two sons of Mac Erc. But, further, the Saint prophesied in like manner concerning the king of the Cruithne who was called Echod Laib, how, being vanquished, he escaped, riding in his chariot.

## NOTES

*“Cule-Drebene”*

Cul Dreimhne, now Coola drummon, six miles north of Sligo. The battle was fought in 561 between Diarmait, King of Ireland, and Columba's kinsmen, the Clan Neill. It was the cause of Columba's exile.

*Ondemone*

The battle, known in the annals as that of Moin-Daire-Lothaire, was fought against the Cruithne, or Irish Picts, by the Northern Hy-Neill in 563.

*King Conall*

This was the king of the Scottish kingdom of Dalriada (the present county of Argyle), who gave Columba leave to settle in Iona.

*Ainmore*

Irish over-king in 568. Ainmore's father Sedna and St. Columba's father Fedhlim were brothers.

*Domhnall and Forcus*

They were afterwards joint Kings of Ireland in 565, on the assassination of Diarmait.

*Echod Laib*

King of the Cruithne, or Irish Picts, known also as the Dal-Araidhe and the Southern Hy-Neill. They occupied the southern part of Co. Antrim and the greater part of the County Down.

## VIII

## OF THE BATTLE OF THE MIATHI.

At another time, that is after many years had run their course after the above-mentioned battle, when the holy man was in the island of Iona he suddenly says to his minister Diormit, "Ring the bell." The Brethren, roused by the sound, run quickly to the church, the holy Abbot himself going before. And there on bended knees he says to them: "Now let us pray to the Lord earnestly for this people and for King Aidan; for



in this hour they are entering battle." And after a moderate interval, having gone out of the oratory looking up to heaven, he says: "Now are the barbarians put to flight and, although it be an unhappy one, yet to Aidan is granted the victory." But the blessed man also prophetically announced the number of the slain of Aidan's army as three hundred and three men.

## NOTES

*The Miathi*

The Maeatae, a British tribe whose territory was near the Roman Wall.

*Diormit*

St. Columba's attendant, often mentioned.

*Ring the bell*

It was a handbell. Warren ("Celtic Liturgy") says that a bell of St. Columba—possibly the very bell here alluded to—is still in existence in the collection made by the late Mr. John Bell, of Dungannon. (See illustration on p. 2.)

*Aidan*

Aedhan, king of the Scottish Dalriada, 574.

## IX

PROPHECY OF ST. COLUMBA CONCERNING THE  
SONS OF KING AIDAN.

At another time, before the aforesaid battle, the Saint questions King Aidan as to his successor in the kingdom. He replying that he does not know which of his three sons is to reign—Arthur, or Eochoid Find, or Domingart—the Saint accordingly

prophecies in this manner : “None of these three will be ruler, for they will fall in battle slain by enemies ; but now if thou hast any other younger sons, let them come to me, and he of them whom God shall choose for king will suddenly rush to my bosom”. And when they were called in, Eochoid Buide, coming to him, according to the Saint’s word, lay in his lap. And immediately the Saint kissed and blessed him, and says to his father : “This is thy survivor, and he is to reign king after thee, and his sons shall reign after him.” And thus it was that afterwards, in their season, all things were completely fulfilled. For Arthur and Eochoid Find were slain, in no long interval of time after, in the above-mentioned battle of the Miathi. But Domingart was killed in Saxonia, in the bloodshed of battle : and Eochoid Buide succeeded to the kingdom after his father.

## X

## CONCERNING DOMHNALL, SON OF AEDH.

Domhnall, son of Aedh, while yet a boy, was brought by his foster-parents to St. Columba in Drum Ceatt, and looking upon him he asks, saying : “Whose son is this whom ye have brought?” and they answered, “This is Domhnall, son of Aedh, who has been brought to thee so that he may return enriched with thy blessing.” When the Saint had blessed him, he says forthwith : “This one shall survive after all his brethren, and be a very famous king ; nor shall he ever be delivered

into his enemies' hands, but by a peaceful death, in old age, and in his own house, in the presence of a crowd of his familiar friends, he shall die upon his bed." And all these things were truly fulfilled, according to the prophecy of the blessed man concerning him.

## NOTES

*Domhnall*

Son of King Aedh, died in 598.

*Drum Ceatt*

Drumceatt, or Dromocheta, the Ridge of Ceatt or Keth (a man's name), in Derry. The famous Convention of Drumceatt, mentioned later by Adamnan, was held here in 575.

*Foster-parents*

Clerical gaurdians.

*He shall die upon his bed*

Not many Irish chieftains died thus, and this made the prophecy all the more remarkable.

## XI

## CONCERNING SCANDLAN, SON OF COLMAN.

At the same time and in the same place, the Saint desiring to visit him, goes to Scandlan, son of Colman, who was detained in chains at the seat of King Aedh, and when he had blessed him, comforting him, says: "My son, be not cast down, but rather rejoice and take courage, for King Aedh, in whose stronghold thou art in chains, will go before thee out of this world, and after some time of exile thou art to rule thirty years king among thine own people.

And again thou shalt be driven from the kingdom and be an exile for some days, after which, invited back by the people, thou shalt reign for three brief periods." And all these things were fully accomplished according to the prophecy of the Saint. For after thirty years he was expelled from the kingdom, and was an exile for a certain space of time ; but afterwards, invited back again by the people, he reigned, not, as he thought, for three years, but for three months, after which he died forthwith.

## XII

A PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN REGARDING  
TWO OTHER RULERS, WHO WERE CALLED  
THE TWO GRANDSONS OF MUIREDACH :  
BAITAN, SON OF MAC ERCE, AND EOCHOID,  
SON OF DOMHNALL.

At another time, making a journey through the rough and rocky district which is called Artdamuirchol, and hearing his companions, namely, Laisran, son of Feradach, and Diarmit, his assistant, discourse by the way about the two above-mentioned kings, he addresses to them these words : " O my children, why talk ye thus idly of these men? for both these kings of whom you now discourse have lately perished, beheaded by enemies. On this very day, too, certain sailors coming from Scotia [Ireland] will tell you these same things as to these kings." And on the same day, seafaring men from Ireland, coming to the place which is called Muirbolc Paradisi, related to his two afore-

mentioned companions, then sailing in the same ship with the Saint, the accomplished prophecy of the venerable man as to those two kings being slain.

## NOTES

*Artdanuirchol*

Now Ardnamurchan, in Argyle.

*Laisran*

First cousin to St. Columba, Abbot of Durrow, and then (600-605) of Iona.

*Scotia*

and Hibernia are used synonymously in this chapter.

*Muirbolc Paradisi*

Port-na-Murloch, in Lismore, Argyle. Muirbolc, Murbolgh, means sea-inlet, and the name Lismore is Gaelic Lios, garden; mor, great; thus, perhaps, explaining the epithet "Paradisi."

## XIII

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
AENGUS, SON OF AEDH COMMAN.

Now this man, exiled from his fatherland with two other brothers, came, an exile, to the Saint, when he was sojourning in Britain; who blessing him and prophesying, utters from his holy breast these words: "This youth, his other brothers being dead, will survive, and is destined to rule for a long time in his fatherland; and his enemies shall fall before him; nor yet shall he ever be betrayed into his enemies' hands; but he shall die a peaceful death, an old man, among his friends." All which

things were completely fulfilled according to the Saint's word. This Aengus is he whose surname was Bronbachal.

## NOTE

*Aengus, surnamed Bronbachal*

Mentioned in the Annals of Ulster, A.D. 648.

## XIV

A PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING THE SON OF KING DIARMAIT, WHO IN THE SCOTIC [IRISH] TONGUE IS CALLED AEDH SLANE.

At another time, when the blessed man is staying for some days in Ireland, he thus speaks prophetically to the aforesaid Aedh who came to him: "Thou shouldst have a care, my son, lest by doing a murderous sin thou lovest the prerogative, predestined by God for thee, of the monarchy of the kingdom of all Ireland; for if ever thou dost commit it thou shalt not enjoy the whole kingdom of thy father, but a part of it only, among thy own tribe, for a short time." And these words of the Saint were thus fulfilled according to his prophecy; for after Suibone, son of Colman, had been treacherously killed by him, he did not, it is said, for more than four years and three months, hold that part of the kingdom granted to him.

## NOTES

*Aedh Slane*

Eldest son of Diarmait, king of the Southern Hy Neill or Cruithne, Irish Picts of South Antrim and

Down, *c.* 580. His seat was on an island in Lough Lene, in Westmeath.

*Suibhne, son of Columbanus*

(Colman Mor), slain by his uncle, Aedh Slane, in 600.

## XV

THE PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING KING RYDDERCH, SON OF TOTHAIL, WHO REIGNED UPON THE ROCK OF CLUAITH.

At another time, this same king, as he was a friend of the holy man, sent some secret embassy to him by Lugbe Mocumin, wishing to know whether he was to be slain by his enemies or not. But Lugbe, questioned by the Saint as to that same king and kingdom and people, and replying, as though in pity, says, "Why dost thou inquire concerning that unhappy man, who cannot by any means know at what hour he may be killed by his enemies?" The Saint then says, "Never will he be delivered into his enemies' hands, but in his own house will he die upon a feather bed." Which prophecy of the Saint concerning King Rydderch was fully accomplished, for, according to his word, he did die a peaceful death in his own house.

### NOTES

#### *Rydderch*

Son of Tudwal. A British king baptised by the disciples of St. Patrick.

#### *The Rock of Cluait*

Alcluith in Bede, called later Dun-Breatan, the fortress of the British (now Dumbarton), the chief place of the British kingdom of Strath Clyde.

## XVI

PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING TWO BOYS, ONE OF WHOM DIED AT THE END OF THE WEEK ACCORDING TO THE SAINT'S WORD.

At another time, two men of the people come to the Saint dwelling in the isle of Iona, one of whom, Meldan by name, asks the Saint concerning his son, who was present, what would be his future. To whom the Saint speaks thus: "Is not to-day the Sabbath [Saturday]? Thy son will die on the Friday, at the end of the coming week: and this day week, that is on the Sabbath, he will be buried here." Then the other peasant, Glasderc by name, none the less inquiring as to the son whom he had with him there, hears this reply of the Saint: "Thy son, Ernane, will see his grandchildren, and be buried, an old man, in this island." All of which things as to both boys in their time were fulfilled, according to the Saint's word.

## NOTES

*Sabbath*

Sabbati dies. Saturday is still Sabbatum in Roman ecclesiastical use.

*Sixth Day*

Feria sexta: Feria, festival, in classical Latin, is now used for week-day in Roman service books; Sunday is Dominica, Monday feria secunda, and so on to Sabbatum, Saturday.

*Glasderc*

Irish, Glas Derg: grey-eyed.



## XVII

THE PROPHECY OF THE SAINT REGARDING COLCA, SON OF AEDH DRAIGNICHE, SPRUNG FROM THE GRANDSONS OF FECHUREG, AND REGARDING A CERTAIN SECRET SIN OF HIS MOTHER.

At another time, the Saint questions the aforesaid Colca, staying with him in the island of Iona, concerning his mother, whether she was religious or not. To whom replying, he says: "I have always known my mother to be well conducted and of good report." The Saint then speaks thus prophetically: "Set out quickly, God willing, for Ireland. Question thy mother very earnestly regarding a certain very great secret sin of hers which she will confess to no man." And he, hearing these things, obeying, went over to Ireland. Thereupon the mother, closely questioned by him, although in the first instance denying, at length confessed her sin, and doing penance according to the judgment of the Saint, was healed; and she wondered much at what had been revealed to the Saint concerning her. But Colca, having returned to the Saint, stayed with him some days, and asking concerning his own end heard from the Saint this answer: "In thy own country, which thou lovest, thou shalt be Prior of some church for many years, and if perchance at some time thou shalt see thy cellarer making merry at a supper of his friends, and whirling round the jug by the neck, know that

in a short time thou shalt die." What more need I say? This same prophecy of the blessed man was so fulfilled in all respects as had been foretold concerning that same Colca.

## NOTES

*Colca*

Colcu, Colgan. An Irish saint.

*Aedh Draigniche*

Aedh "of the black-thorn."

*Grandsons of Fechureg*

Ui Fiachrach, a tribe whose territories were in Galway and Mayo.

*Doing penance according to the judgment of the Saint, was healed*

Sanata: healed, spiritually healed after penitence, absolution and penance, as in Psalm cxlvi.: "Qui sanat contritos corde et alligat contritiones eorum"; and in Jeremiah iii. 22: "Et sanabo aversiones vestras"; and Jeremiah viii. 11: "Et sanabant contritionem filiae populi mei ad ignominiam."

*"Prior of some church"*

The Latin is "Primarius." The parish church of Kilcolgan, in Galway, derives its name from Colgan.

## XVIII

CONCERNING LAISRAN, THE GARDENER, A  
HOLY MAN.

The blessed man ordered a certain monk of his, by name Trena, of the tribe Mac-Ui-Runtir, to go on a certain day as his messenger to Scotia [Ireland].

And he, obeying the command of the man of God, quickly prepares for the voyage, and he complains in the Saint's presence that one sailor was wanting. The Saint accordingly answering, utters from his sacred breast these words, saying : " I cannot now find for thee the sailor whom thou sayest is not yet at hand. Go in peace : until thou comest to Hibernia thou shalt have prosperous and favourable winds. And thou shalt see a certain man from afar coming to meet thee, who will first of all the others lay hold of the prow of thy ship in Ireland : he shall be the companion of thy journey for some days in Hibernia, and will accompany thee on thy return thence to us ; a man chosen of God, who for all the remainder of his time will live piously in this my monastery." What more can I add? Trena, receiving a blessing from the Saint, crossed all the seas with full sails ; and behold, as his little vessel was nearing the port, Laisran Mocumoie runs up quicker than the others and catches hold of the prow. The sailors know him for the man of whom the Saint had foretold.

## NOTE

*Mac-Ui-Runtir*

The Dal-Ruinntir were situated in the western part of the county Louth.

## XIX

HOW THE SAINT, KNOWING BEFOREHAND,  
SPOKE OF A GREAT WHALE.

On a certain day, when the venerable man was living in the isle of Iona, a certain Brother, Berach by name, proposing to sail to the Ethican island [Tiree], coming to the Saint in the morning asks to be blessed by him. And the Saint, looking at him, says: "O son, take very great care to-day not to attempt to cross over the broad ocean in a direct course for the Ethican land, but, rather, going round about, sail by the smaller islands, for the reason that, terrified by some marvellous monster, thou mayest narrowly escape thence." And he having received the Saint's blessing, departed, and, going into the ship, set off as though little heeding the Saint's word. And then, crossing the wider reaches of the Ethican sea, he and the sailors who were there with him look, and behold! a whale of wondrous and immense size, lifting itself up like a mountain, floating on the surface, opened wide its mouth all bristling with teeth. Thereupon, the sail having been lowered, the rowers greatly terrified, turned back, and could hardly escape from the commotion of the waves arising from the movement of the monster; and, remembering the Saint's prophetic word, they marvelled.

On the same day also, Baithene, being about to take ship for the afore-mentioned island, the Saint intimated to him in the morning concerning that

same whale, saying: "Last night at midnight a great whale raised itself from the depth of the sea, and it will lift itself to the surface of the ocean to-day between the Iouan and Ethican islands." And Baithene, answering him, said, "I and that beast are under the power of God." "Go in peace," says the Saint, "thy faith in Christ shall defend thee from this danger." Then Baithene, having received the Saint's benediction, sails out from the harbour, and, no narrow stretches of the sea having been passed over, he and his companions behold the whale, and when all were greatly alarmed, he alone, undaunted, with both hands upraised, blesses the waters and the whale. And in the same moment the vast monster plunging beneath the waves, nowhere appeared to them again.

## NOTES

*The Iouan and Ethican islands*

I have allowed the adjectival form Ioua to stand here. Adamnan uses it thus throughout when referring to Iona.

*The Ethican island*

From Eth, corn. It is mentioned in the lives of several Irish saints as Terra hith; and from Tir itha, the Irish compound of that name, was formed Tirieth, Tyre-è, Tireig, and (its present form) Tiree. It lies twenty miles north-west of Iona.

*The direct course*

This is by the open sea. The indirect route "by the smaller islands" would be past Staffa to the Treshnish islands, and thence westwards to the north point of Tiree.

## XX

## A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN BAITAN, WHO WITH OTHERS SAILED FORTH SEEKING AN OCEAN SOLITUDE.

At another time a certain Baitan, by family a descendant of Niath Tolorg, when about to seek with others a solitude in the sea, asked to be blessed by the Saint, to whom the Saint, bidding farewell, spoke concerning him this prophetic word: "This man, who goes to seek a solitude in the ocean, will not be buried in a solitude, but will be buried in that place where a woman will drive sheep across his grave." And so the same Baitan, after long wanderings over stormy waters, not finding the desert, returned home and remained there many years the master of a small monastic house which is called in Scotie [Irish] Lathreginden. And dying after a while, it happened at the same time when he was buried in the Oak Grove of Galgach, that on account of a hostile incursion the common people near to the church of that place fled to it with their wives and children. Whence it happened that one day a certain woman was caught who was driving her sheep over the grave of that same man, recently buried. And one of those who saw it, a holy priest, said, "Now is fulfilled the prophecy of St. Columba, uttered many years ago." And this above-mentioned priest, Mailodran by name, a soldier of Christ, of the clan Mocurin, narrated these things concerning Baitan, and told them to me.

## NOTES

*An ocean solitude*

That is, a desert island in the ocean, where he might live as a hermit.

*Niath Tolorg*

Niath-champion. Tolorg is a Pictish name.

*Lathreginden*

It has not been identified, but was presumably near Derry, "the Oak Grove of Galgach."

*Of the clan Mocurin*

Or perhaps Mocucurin, Mac-Ui-Curin.

## XXI

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN AS TO ONE  
NEMAN, A MOCK PENITENT.

At another time the Saint comes to the Hinbinan isle, and on the same day orders that some indulgence in food should be allowed even to the penitents. But there was there among the penitents a certain Neman, son of Cathir, who, bidden by the Saint, refused to accept the little indulgence offered. Whom the Saint addresses in these words: "O Neman, dost thou not accept some indulgence in food allowed by me and Baithene? There will be a time in which thou wilt furtively eat mare's flesh with robbers in a wood." This same man, therefore, having afterwards returned to the world, was found with robbers in a wood eating such flesh, from a wooden grill, according to the word of the Saint.

## NOTES

*The Hinbinan isle*

Probably Eileann-na-Naoimh, the Isle of Saints. There are some very interesting ruins of early buildings on the island—a church and three beehive-shaped cells.

*Indulgence in food*

It was usual in St. Columba's monasteries to relax the discipline on the arrival of a visitor.

*Wooden grill*

The Latin word is "craticula," a hurdle grate, grill, or griddle. Pocock, in his "Irish Tour," 1752, says: "I went to the Causeway late, and Mr. Duncane came and dined with me, and sent a fresh salmon, which was roasted before a turf fire; it was cut in pieces and *stuck on five or six sticks* set in the ground round the fire, and sometimes taken up and turned." Just such a grill must Neman have used in the woods.

## XXII

CONCERNING A CERTAIN UNHAPPY MAN'S  
TERRIBLE SIN.

At another time the Saint arouses the Brethren in the dead of night, and when they are gathered together in the church says to them: "Now let us pray fervently to the Lord, for in this hour some sin unheard of in the world has been committed, for which the vengeance of the judge is very much to be feared." And of this sin he spoke next day to a few who were questioning about it, saying: "After a few months that unhappy fellow will come to the isle of Iona with Lugaid, who knows



not about it." And so on another day, some months having intervened, the Saint speaks to Diormit, thus commanding him: "Rise quickly; behold Lugaid is drawing near; and tell him to cast out the wretch whom he has with him in the ship on the Malean isle [Mull], lest he tread the turf of this island." And he, obeying the Saint's command, goes to the sea and tells Lugaid as he was approaching all the words of the Saint concerning the unhappy man. On hearing which, that wretch swore that he would never take food with others unless he first saw Saint Columba and spoke to him. And having returned to the Saint, Diormit related to him these words of the wretch. And having heard them the Saint goes down to the haven; and to Baithene, who was suggesting that the repentance of the wretch should be received, bringing forward passages of Holy Scripture in evidence, the Saint accordingly says: "O Baithene, this man has committed fratricide after the manner of Cain." Then the wretch on his bended knees on the shore promised that he would fulfil the rules of penance according to the sentence of the Saint. And the Saint says to him: "If for twelve years thou do penance among the Britons with weeping and tears, and never to thy dying day return to Ireland, perhaps God may forgive thy sin." Saying this the Saint, turning to his own people, says: "This man is a son of perdition, who will not fulfil the penance which he has promised, but will soon return to Scotia [Ireland], and there, in a short time, he will perish, slain by his enemies." All which

things so came to pass, according to the Saint's prophecy ; for the unhappy man returning in those same days to Ireland, falling into the hands of his enemies, was slain in the region called Lea. He was of the descendants of Turtre.

#### NOTES

##### *Lugaid*

The messenger of the monastery.

##### *The Malean isle*

The island of Mull, off the south-west extremity of which, and separated from it by the narrow Sound, lies Iona.

##### *The Rules of Penance*

“Leges penitentiæ,” the penitential canons. The penitential code of the Irish Church was extremely severe.

##### *According to the sentence of the Saint*

According to the Catholic Faith, the Priest, as the authorised minister of God, in the tribunal of penance is judge and has to decide as to guilt and reparation due.

##### *Twelve years*

A usual term of monastic penance.

##### *Lea*

In Irish, Li ; near Coleraine.

##### *Turtre*

In Irish, Ui Tuirtre. The Hy-Tuirtre and the Fir-Li were descended from Fiachra Tort, son of Colla Uais, King of Ireland, 332. Their territory was on the shores of Lough Neagh.

## XXIII

## OF THE VOWEL-LETTER "I."

One day Baithene, coming to the Saint, says : "I have need of one of the Brethren to look over with me and to revise the Psalter which I have written." Having heard which, the Saint thus speaks : "Why dost thou bring this trouble upon us without cause? For in this thy Psalter, of which thou speakest, not one superfluous letter will be found, nor is any wanting except the vowel 'I', which alone is missing." And so the whole Psalter having been read through, it was found on examination to be as the Saint had foretold.

## NOTE

*To revise the Psalter*

An interesting instance of the extreme care with which the Scriptures were transcribed in the monasteries. Columba himself made writing one of his chief duties. On the day of his death he was busy with a transcription of the Psalter, and he instructed his successor to complete it. The debt of posterity to the monks in this respect cannot be estimated; but for them much of the world's literature would have perished; the handing down to us of the Holy Scriptures themselves is due to their care. Peter, Abbot of Cluny, 1094-1157, wrote thus in praise of literary occupation in monasteries: "Shrubs cannot perhaps be planted, nor seeds watered, nor any other rural occupation undertaken on account of monastic retirement. But, what is of greater interest, let the hand be applied to the pen in place of the plough; let the page be sown with divine letters instead of cultivating the field. Let the seeds of the Word of God be sown on paper, which, when ripe—that is, when the

books are finished—may fill the hungry reader with manifold fruit and appease the longing after heavenly bread. Thus truly shall you become a silent preacher of the Word of God, and though your tongue be silent, your hand shall sound in the ear of many nations with a loud voice. The reward of your labours shall increase after death, as long as the life of your book continues.”

## XXIV

CONCERNING A BOOK WHICH FELL INTO A JAR OF WATER AS THE SAINT HAD PREDICTED.

Again one day, sitting at the hearth in the monastery, he sees at some distance Lugbe, of the tribe Mocumin, reading a book; to whom he suddenly says: “Take care, son, take care, for I think that the book which thou readest is about to fall into a vessel full of water.” Which soon so happened, for the youth above mentioned, after a short time rising to perform some service in the monastery, and having forgotten the word of the blessed man, the book, which he was holding carelessly under his arm, suddenly fell into a jar full of water.

## NOTE

*The hearth*

Probably the kitchen fire of turf burning on a hearth.

## XXV

CONCERNING THE INK-HORN AWKWARDLY UPSET.

On another day, about the same time, a shout was raised on the other side of the Strait of the isle

of Iona : and the Saint, sitting in his little hut, which rested on a wooden floor, hearing the shout, says : “The man who is shouting beyond the strait is not a man of refined sentiment, for to-day he will upset and spill my ink-horn.” And Diormit, his attendant, hearing this word, standing for a little while in front of the gate, awaited the arrival of the troublesome guest that he might guard the ink-horn. But for some cause or other he soon went thence ; and after he had gone the troublesome guest arrived, and in eager haste to kiss the Saint upset the ink-horn, overturned by the skirt of his garment.

## NOTES

*Little hut resting on a wooden floor*

Columba's own cell, probably of boards or wattles. It is again referred to in III. xxii, I. xxxv, II. xvi, and III. xv. The hut was built on an eminence, and was raised from the ground perhaps on tree-stumps or boards, and was reached by a few steps.

*Ink-horn*

“Corniculum atramenti.” Representations of them are seen in ancient manuscripts. There is one with a figure of St. Matthew in an Irish MS. in the Library of the Monastery of St. Gall, Codex No. 1395.

## XXVI

OF THE ARRIVAL OF A CERTAIN GUEST, WHOM  
THE SAINT ANNOUNCED BEFOREHAND.

So again, at another time, on the third day of the week (Tuesday), the Saint thus spoke to the Brethren : “To-morrow, the fourth day, we intend

to fast ; but nevertheless, by the arrival of a certain troublesome guest, the customary fast will be broken." Which happened, as it had been fore-shown to the Saint ; for on the morning of the same fourth day of the week another stranger was shouting across the Strait, Aidan by name, son of Fergno, a most religious man who, as is said, ministered for twelve years to Brendan Mocualti ; and he, upon his arrival, occasioned a relaxation of that day's fast according to the Saint's word.

## NOTES

*The fourth day (Wednesday) we intend to fast*

The Wednesday and Friday fasts were probably introduced into Ireland by St. Patrick, and Saturday also was observed as a fast day by the Western Church.

*Brendan Mocualti*

St. Brendan, of Clonfert. Mac-Ua-Alti was his clan name.

## XXVII

OF A CERTAIN MAN IN DISTRESS WHO WAS SHOUTING ACROSS THE AFORESAID STRAIT.

On a certain day also, hearing some one shouting across the Strait, the Saint speaks on this wise : "Much to be pitied is that man who is shouting, who comes to us seeking matters concerning medicines for the body : and it were more fitting for him to-day to do true penance for his sins, for at the end of this week he will die." Which saying, those who were present told to the unhappy man

when he arrived. But he, making light of it, took the things which he had asked for and quickly went back ; and according to the Saint's prophetic word, he died before the end of the same week.

## NOTE

*Medicines for the body*

St. Columba's island monastery at Iona was resorted to, as were all other monasteries, by the sick and ailing for medical treatment.

## XXVIII

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN REGARDING  
A CITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, BURNED  
BY SULPHUREOUS FIRE THAT FELL FROM  
HEAVEN.

Again, at another time, Lugbe, of the clan Mocumin, of whom we have made mention above, coming to the Saint one day after the threshing of the corn, could by no means look upon his face, suffused as it was with a marvellous glow, and he immediately fled in great fear. Whom the Saint, gently clapping his hands, calls back. And he returning, and being at once questioned by the Saint why he had fled so quickly, gave this reply : "I fled because I was greatly frightened." And after some little interval, becoming more confident, he ventures to question the Saint, saying : Has any awful vision been shown to thee in this hour?" And the Saint gave him answer thus : "Such a terrible vengeance has now been wrought in a remote part of the world !" "What vengeance?"

says the youth, "and in what country is it done?" The Saint then speaks thus: "A sulphureous flame from heaven has this hour been sent down upon a city of the Roman Empire, situated within the boundaries of Italy; and nearly three thousand men, besides a number of mothers and children, have perished. And before the present year is ended Gallic sailors, coming hither from the provinces of the Gauls, shall relate these same things to thee." Which words, after some months, were proved to have been true. For the same Lugbe, going with the holy man to the Land's Head [Cantyre], questioning the captain and the sailors of a bark that arrived, hears narrated by them all those things concerning the city with its citizens, just as they were foretold by the illustrious man.

## NOTES

*A city of the Roman Empire*

The Alvum of Ptolemy, now Citta Nuova, north of the river Quieto, in Istria.

*Gallic sailors*

There was frequent intercourse between Gaul, Britain, and Ireland.

*Land's Head*

Cantyre. Fifty miles from Iona by sea.

From this chapter it is clear that the monks of Iona in the time of St. Columba were in active sympathy and touch with their brethren in Italy and Gaul.



## XXIX

A VISION OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING  
LAISRAN, SON OF FERADACH.

One wintry and very cold day the Saint, afflicted by a great sorrow, wept. And his attendant, Diormit, questioning him as to the cause of his sadness, received from him this reply: "Not without reason, child, am I sad in this hour, seeing as I do my monks now wearied with heavy labour, whom Laisran is vexing with the erection of some very great building; a thing which greatly displeases me." Wonderful to say, at that very moment Laisran, dwelling in the monastery of the Oakwood Plain, under some compulsion, and as it were fired by some internal flame, orders the monks to stop working and some food for refreshment to be prepared; and not only to take their ease on that day, but to rest also on other days of severe weather. And the Saint, hearing in spirit these consolatory words spoken by Laisran to the Brethren, ceased to weep; and though himself living in the isle of Iona, related them throughout, rejoicing exceedingly, to the Brethren who were there at the time; and he blessed Laisran, the comforter of the monks.

## NOTES

*Laisran, son of Feradach*

He succeeded Baithen as Abbot of Hy (Iona), Baithen having been the successor of Columba. Laisran's father was the Saint's first cousin.

*Some very great building*

In the heading of Book III. ch. xv. this is called "monasterium rotundum," no doubt one of the famous round towers.

*The Oakwood Plain*

"Roboretus Campus," Dair-Magh, Durrow.

## XXX

CONCERNING FEACHNA THE WISE, HOW HE CAME  
AS A PENITENT TO ST. COLUMBA WHO FORE-  
ANNOUNCED HIM.

At another time the Saint, sitting on the top of the hill which from afar rises above this our monastery, having turned to his attendant, Diormit, spoke, saying: "I wonder why a certain ship from Scotia [Ireland] is approaching so slowly; and it brings a certain sage, who, having fallen into some guilt, is going through a tearful penance, and will soon arrive." Not very long after, the attendant, looking southwards, sees the sail of a ship nearing the haven. And when he pointed it out to the Saint as it was approaching he quickly rises, saying, "Let us go to meet the stranger, whose true penance Christ accepts." But Feachna, descending from the ship, runs up to meet the Saint on his way to the port, with weeping and lamentation. Kneeling down on bended knees at his feet, he most bitterly bewails and confesses his sins in the presence of all who were there. Then the Saint, weeping in the same way along with him, says to him: "Arise, son, and be comforted; the sins which thou hast committed

are forgiven thee, because, as it is written, "A contrite and humble heart God doth not despise." And he, rising, was joyfully received by the Saint, and after some days was sent journeying in peace to Baithene, at that time dwelling as prelate in the Plain of Lunge.

## NOTES

*On the top of the hill*

Either Dun-i, the highest hill on the island (330 feet), or Cnoc-mor which overhangs the village, Reilig-Orain; probably the latter, and if so, the haven to which the ship was sailing would be Port-na-Mairtear, or Martyr's Bay. The usual landing place, however, was Port Ronain, near the village.

*Baithene . . . prelate*

In ch. xli. and III. viii. Baithene again appears as head of the penitential house of the Plain of Lunge, "Plain of the Ships," in Ethica terra (Tiree). It was probably near the creek called Port-na-lung, where Soroby now is, and where in the old burying ground stands a very ancient cross.

## XXXI

THE PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
HIS MONK, CAILTAN.

At another time, sending two monks to another monk of his, Cailtan by name, who at that time was Superior in the Cell which to-day is called by the name of his brother Diuni, adjacent to the Lake of the River Aba, the Saint sends by those messengers these words: "Haste ye quickly to Cailtan, and say to him that he come to me without the least delay." And they obeying the Saint's word, going

forth, coming to the cell of Diuni intimated to Cailtan the nature of their mission. And he, in the same hour, on no account delaying, followed the messengers of the Saint, a companion of their journey, and quickly came to him dwelling in the Iouan Isle. Whom seeing, the Saint, thus speaking, addresses in these words: "O Cailtan, well hast thou done, obediently hastening to me; rest thee awhile. It was for this reason, loving thee as a friend, that I sent to thee, inviting thee that here with me thou mayest finish the course of thy life in true obedience. For before the end of this week thou wilt depart in peace unto the Lord." Which having heard, he gave thanks to God, and kissed the Saint, weeping, and, his blessing being received from him, goes to the guest house; and falling sick on that same night following, he passed away to Christ the Lord that same week, according to the Saint's word.

## NOTE

*The Lake of the River Aba*

Probably Loch Awe.

## XXXII

THE FORESIGHT AND PROPHECY OF THE SAINT  
CONCERNING TWO BROTHERS WHO WERE  
STRANGERS.

One Lord's Day there was shouting beyond the often mentioned Strait. Which shout the Saint hearing, he says to the Brethren who were there,

“Go quickly, and bring at once the strangers coming to us from a distant land.” And they, immediately obeying, crossing the Strait, brought the guests, and the Saint having kissed them, then asks them the object of their journey. And they answering say : “We are come that we may dwell with thee even for this year.” To whom the Saint gave this reply : “Ye cannot sojourn with me for the space of one year as ye say, unless you first make the monastic vow.” Those who were present much wondered that this should be said to guests just arrived that very hour. To which words of the Saint, the elder brother answering says, “Although up to the present hour we never had this purpose in mind, yet we will follow thy counsel, divinely inspired as we believe it to be.” What more need be said? At that same moment entering the oratory with the Saint, devoutly and on bended knees they took the monastic vow. Then the Saint, turning to the Brethren, says : “These two strangers, offering themselves a living sacrifice to God, and in a short time fulfilling a long space of Christian warfare, will soon, in this very month, pass away to Christ the Lord in peace.” Hearing which both brothers, giving thanks to God, were conducted to the guest house ; and seven days having passed the elder brother began to sicken, and at the end of the same week departed to the Lord. And in like manner the other, after seven other days, fell ill and happily passed away to the Lord at the end of that week. And so, according to the true prophecy of the Saint,

within the limit of the same month, both end this present life.

#### NOTES

##### *They took the monastic vow*

This is an instance of admission to the monastic order without the usual year of probation. Hence the surprise of the Brethren.

##### *A living sacrifice to God*

Rom. xii. 7.

##### *In a short time fulfilling a long space of Christian warfare*

St. Columba refers here to the Book of Wisdom, iv. 13, "Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa", "Being made perfect in a short space he fulfilled a long time". The quotation from Wisdom is interesting as showing St. Columba's familiarity with one of the Sacred Books now classed by the Church of England among the Apocrypha. The late Queen Victoria selected this phrase for the monument she raised near Balmoral to the memory of Prince Albert.

### XXXIII

#### THE PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN ARTBRANAN.

When the blessed man was staying for some days in the Scian Isle [Skye], striking with his staff a little spot of ground of a certain place near the sea, he thus speaks to his companions: "Wonderful to say, O my children, this day in this spot of ground a certain aged heathen, who has kept his natural innocence throughout all his life, will be baptised, and will die, and will be buried." And behold, after the interval of about one hour, a vessel

arrived at the same port, in the bows of which a certain decrepit old man was borne, the chief of the Cohort of Geona, and two youths, lifting him out of the ship, set him down before the eyes of the blessed man. And he, having received the Word of God from the Saint through an interpreter, forthwith believing, was baptised by him, and after the ministrations of baptism were completed, as the Saint had prophesied, he thereupon died in the same place, and there his comrades bury him, a cairn being raised over him. And this is to be seen to-day on the sea shore; and the river of the same place in which he had received baptism is to this very day called by the inhabitants from his name, "Dobur Artbranani."

## NOTES

*Artbranani*

A Gaelic and Pictish name; *Art*, noble, and *branan* diminutive of *bran*, a raven.

*His natural innocence*

"Naturale bonum": the moral law of nature, of the natural reason. The phrase is used again in Book III. xiv.

*The Cohort of Geona*

Geona can hardly be the small island of Gunna between Tiree and Coll. The Cohort was probably a Pictish one.

*Through an interpreter*

St. Columba, therefore, did not know the Pictish language, one of the four which the Venerable Bede says were spoken in Britain. King Oswald, he tells us, brought under his dominion "all the nations and provinces of Britain which are divided into four languages, namely, the Britons, the Picts, the Scots, and the English."

*A cairn being raised*

It is interesting to know that St. Columba consented to the burial in heathen fashion of him whom he had just received into the Church. The heathen comrades of Artbranan would naturally wish thus to commemorate their leader.

*Dobur Artbrananani*

Dobur, or Dobhar, is a common name in Gaelic and Cymric for water. The stream has not been identified. There are in Skye a loch, an island, and a church all bearing the name of St. Columba.

## XXXIV

CONCERNING THE REMOVAL OF A BOAT BY  
ORDER OF THE SAINT.

At another time, travelling beyond the "Backbone of Britain" [Drum Alban, the Grampians], having found among desert fields a certain little village, the Saint, taking up his abode there by the bank of a certain rivulet at its entrance into a lake, on the same night wakes his sleeping companions, half asleep as they were, saying: "Now, now, go, quickly going out, and bring ye hither at once our boat which ye have put in a house on the other side of the stream, and put it in a nearer hut." And they, immediately obeying, did as they were bid. And when they were again at rest the Saint, after a while, quietly nudges Diormit, saying: "Standing now outside the house, look you what is going on in that village where you first put your boat." And he, obeying the Saint's order, goes out of the house, and, looking, sees the whole village being



burnt up by devouring flame. And returning to the Saint, he told him what was going on there. Then the Saint told the Brethren about a certain rival, his enemy, who had burned those houses that same night.

## NOTES

*The Backbone of Britain*

The dorsal ridge of Drum Alban, the mountain chain between Perthshire and Argyle, the watershed of Scotland, and the division between the Picts on the east and the Scots on the west.

*A certain rivulet flowing into a lake*

In the list of chapter headings of the original the lake is called *Stagnum Loch-diae*. It has not been identified.

*Your boat (Navicula)*

This would be a wickerwork hide-covered currach, or coracle, which the Saint and his companions carried with them for crossing lakes and rivers.

## XXXV

CONCERNING GALLAN, SON OF FACHTNA, WHO  
WAS IN THE PROVINCE OF COLGA, SON OF  
CALLACH.

Again, one day, the Saint, sitting in his little hut, prophesies to the same Colga who was reading by his side, and says: "Now are demons bearing away to hell an extortioner, one of the chiefs of thy province." But Colga hearing this, and writing down the time and the hour on a tablet, after some months returning home, found on inquiry from the inhabitants of that region that

Gallan, son of Fachtna, had died at that very moment of time in which the blessed man had told him of one who was carried off by demons.

### XXXVI

PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING  
FINDCHAN, THE PRIEST, FOUNDER OF THAT  
MONASTERY WHICH IN SCOTIC [IRISH] IS  
CALLED ARTCHAIN, IN THE ETHICAN LAND.

At another time, the above-mentioned priest, Findchan, a soldier of Christ, brought with him from Ireland to Britain, wearing the clerical habit, Aedh, surnamed "the Black," a scion of a royal family, a Cruthinian [Irish Pict] by nation, that he might stay with him in his monastery for some years. And this Aedh the Black had indeed been a very bloodthirsty man and a murderer of many; and he had even slain Diormit, son of Cernal, ordained, by God's will, ruler of all Ireland. This same Aedh, therefore, after some time passed in retirement, having summoned a bishop, was ordained priest, although somewhat irregularly, while with the above-named Findchan. The Bishop, however, did not dare to lay hand upon his head unless first Findchan himself, who loved Aedh with mere human affection, would first place his right hand upon his head in approval. And when this ordination was afterwards made known to the holy man, he was deeply grieved: then forthwith he

pronounced concerning Findchan himself, and concerning Aedh thus ordained this fearful sentence, saying: "That right hand which, against law and ecclesiastical rite, Findchan has laid upon the head of the son of perdition shall soon rot, and after great tortures of pain shall go before him into the earth for burial; and he himself shall live for many years after the burial of his hand. But Aedh, improperly ordained, will return as a dog to his vomit, and be again a bloody murderer; and at last his throat shall be pierced by a lance and falling from wood into water, he will die by drowning. Such an end of life he who murdered the King of all Scotia [Ireland] has long ago deserved." Which prophecy of the blessed man was in each case fulfilled; for the right hand of the presbyter, Findchan, having rotted through a blow, went before him into the earth, being buried in that island which is called Ommon; but he himself, according to the word of Saint Columba, lived for many years after. But Aedh "the Black," priest only in name, having returned to his former wickednesses, was treacherously pierced by a lance, fell from the prow of a raft into the water of a lake, and perished.

## NOTES

*Findchan, the presbyter*

His life is given by Colgan, "Acta Sanctorum", 1645.

*Artchain in the Ethican land*

Artchain, or Ardchaoin, was a hill in the Ethican land, i.e. the island of Tیره, but has not been identified. Tیره was much frequented by the religious of Ireland;

Saints Brendan, Cainnech, Comgall, and Colmanela all visited it.

*Aedh, surnamed "the Black," sprung from a royal family,  
Cruthinian by nation*

Aedh Dubh, son of Suibhne, of the Dal Araidhe, who inhabited parts of Antrim and Down, and were known also as the Cruithne. He was chief of that tribe 565, King of Uladh 581, and died 588.

*Diormit, son of Cербal*

Diarmid MacCearrbhal's death is recorded in the Annals, anno 558: "After Diarmid, the son of Fergus Cearrbhal, had been twenty years King of Ireland, he was killed by Aedh Dubh, the son of Suibhne, King of Dalaradia. His head was taken to Clonmacnoise to be buried there and his body to Connor." Diarmid ruled over all Ireland, his royal seat being at Tara.

*This same Aedh . . . was ordained presbyter, etc.*

Aedh took the monastic habit as a penance, quite a common practice among the Irish and other royal personages then and later. Seven years was the time of penance to be done under monastic rule for homicide. Aedh violated God's law, which requires proved virtue in Deacon, Priest, and Bishop. The early Canons excluded from Holy Orders all who lost their baptismal innocence, and the rigour of public penance, far from removing this defect, was regarded as a public proof of unworthiness. Aedh's ordination by the bishop was valid, but he was priest only in name, as Adamnan says, because he wanted the virtue becoming his sacred character.

*That island called Ommon*

It has not been identified.

*Treacherously pierced by a lance . . . perished*

All the principal Irish Annals mention the death of Aedh Dubh. He was "slain by Fiachna, son of Baedan

. . . in a ship by the Cruithneans", probably on Lough Neagh, near which was Rathmore, his regal seat.

"Aedh Dubh, son of mild-judging Suibhne,  
Seven years was his fame on this earth ;  
The marks of Cruithnean weapons in his wounds,  
Fierce and active in deeds was he."

### XXXVII

OF A CERTAIN SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION SENT  
BY THE HOLY MAN TO THE MONKS ON  
THEIR WAY BACK, WEARY FROM TOIL.

Among these wonderful manifestations of prophetic spirit it does not seem out of place to commemorate also in our little record a certain spiritual consolation which the monks of St. Columba felt on one occasion from his spirit meeting them by the way. For once, as the Brethren after harvest work, returning to the monastery in the evening and arriving at that place which is called in Scotie [Irish] Cuuleilne, which place is said to be midway between the western plain of the island of Iona and our monastery, they seemed each one to feel within himself something wonderful and unusual, which, however, they dared not speak of the one to the other. And so for some days, in the same place and at the same evening hour, they perceived it. But in those days St. Baithene was the superintendent of labours among them, and one day he spoke thus to them saying, "Now, Brothers, if ye unexpectedly experience anything unusual and wonderful in this

place, half-way between the harvest field and the monastery, ye ought to declare it, each one of you."

Then one of them, a senior, says: "According to thy order I will tell thee what has been shown to me in this place; for in these days past, and even now, I perceive some fragrance of a marvellous odour, as if that of all flowers collected into one; and also a certain burning as of fire, not painful, but as it were soothing; and, besides, a certain unaccustomed and incomparable joy spread abroad in my heart, which of a sudden consoles me in a wonderful way, and so greatly gladdens me that I can remember sadness no more, labour no more. Aye! and the load, albeit heavy, which I am carrying on my back from this place until we come to the monastery, is so much lightened, how I know not, that I do not feel that I am bearing any burden."

What more shall I say? So all the harvest workers one by one declare, each one for himself, that they had felt exactly as this one of them who had first spoken, and one and all together on bended knees besought St. Baithene that he would let them know, ignorant as they were, the cause and origin of that wondrous consolation which he himself felt just as the rest perceived it. To whom, thereupon, he gave this answer saying: "Ye know that our senior, Columba, mindful of our toil, thinks anxiously about us and grieves that we come to him so late; and by reason that he comes not in body to meet us, his spirit meets our steps, and that it is which so much consoles

and makes us glad. And hearing these words, still kneeling, with great joy and with hands spread out to heaven, they venerate Christ in the holy and blessed man.

But we ought not to be silent as to what has confidently been handed down by some who have put it to the test concerning the voice of the blessed man in chanting the Psalms. For the voice of the venerable man, chanting with the Brethren in the church, was lifted up in a wonderful manner and sometimes heard for four furlongs, that is 500 paces ; sometimes indeed for eight furlongs, that is a mile. Wonderful to relate ! yet in the ears of those who were standing with him in the church the pitch of his voice did not exceed the compass of the human voice. But nevertheless at the same hour, those who were standing more than a mile off heard the same voice so clearly that they could distinguish every separate syllable of the verses which he was singing : for his voice sounded alike in the ears of those who heard it near at hand and those who heard it from afar. But this miracle of the voice of the blessed man is not known to have happened continually, but rarely ; which, however, without the grace of the Divine Spirit, could by no means have happened at all.

But we must not be silent concerning what is said once to have happened as regards this incomparable elevation of his voice near the fortress of King Brude. For while the Saint himself, with a few brethren, was celebrating according to custom the Vesper praises of God outside the King's fort-

ress, certain Magi [Druids] approaching them did all they could to prevent the sound of Divine praise being heard from their mouth among the heathen people. On this becoming known, the Saint began to chant the forty-fourth psalm, and in a marvellous manner his voice was at that moment so lifted up into the air, like terrible thunder, that both King and people were affrighted with fear intolerable.

## NOTES

*Cuuleilne*

Half-way between the "Campulum," the Machar, or plain, of the island of Iona and the monastery is a spot called Bol-lethne, which may be a corruption of the original name. From the narrative it would seem that it was here that the most laborious part of the way began, and at Bol-leithne there is an ascent, and the path becomes rugged.

*St. Baithene*

He was one of the original companions of St. Columba, and was head of a monastic settlement in Tiree. In the narrative he was holding the office of *dispensator operum* in Iona. He became Abbot of Iona after St. Columba's death.

*The Voice of the venerable man*

The Saint was possessed of his wonderful voice even in his boyhood. In the ancient Irish Life of Columba, in the Leabhar Breac, the Book of Lismore, it is written:—

"The sound of the Voice of Columbkille  
Great its sweetness above all clerics:  
To the end of fifteen hundred paces,  
Though great the distance, it was distinctly heard."

*The fortress of King Brude*

From Book II. we learn that this was near the north-eastern end of Loch Ness, probably on the ridge called



Torvean, part of which is encircled by ditches and ramparts.

*The Vesper praises of God*

“Vespertinales Dei laudes.”

*Certain Magi*

The word Magi is always used in the Acts of the Irish Saints to mean the Druids.

*The forty-fourth Psalm*

That is, according to the Septuagint and Latin Versions used by St. Columba; the 45th according to the Hebrew and Authorised English Version. “Eructavit cor meum.”

XXXVIII

CONCERNING A CERTAIN RICH MAN WHO WAS CALLED LUGUD CLODUS

At another time, when the Saint was staying in Scotia [Ireland] for some days, seeing another cleric sitting in a car, who was gaily driving over the Plain of Breg, after first inquiring about him who he was, he received this reply concerning him from the man's friends: “This is Lugud Clodus, a man rich and honoured among the people.” The Saint, thereupon answering, says: “Not so do I see him, but as a wretched and poor fellow. On the day on which he will die he will be retaining at his dwelling, in a walled pound, three stray cattle of his neighbours, and of these he will order one choice cow to be slain for himself, and will ask for some part of its flesh to be cooked and given him, he lying the while in a couch of shame and sin. From which portion, as soon as he takes

a bite, he will thereon be immediately choked, and die." All which things, as is handed down by well-informed persons, were fulfilled according to the Saint's prophetic saying.

## NOTES

*Mounted on a car*

Patrick Chalmers, in his "Ancient Sculptured Monuments of Angus", gives a drawing of an ancient car from a monument in the church of Meigle, in Perthshire. It was in such a car that St. Columba saw Ludug Clodus "gaily driving."

*The Plain of Breg*

In the eastern part of the County Meath. The name survives in Slieve Breggh, a hill in the north-eastern part of that county.

*Walled pound,*

"Maceria": in Irish, *Cashel*. In the Book of Armagh is a charter of A.D. 1004, which styles the southern kings, "Reges Maceriae", kings of Cashel. The fortified farms of the Campagna in Italy are known as Maseria.

## XXXIX

PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING NEMAN,  
SON OF GRUTHRICHE.

Now, therefore, when the Saint corrected Neman for his evil deeds, thinking lightly of the Saint he mocked him. And replying to him, the blessed man says: "In the Name of the Lord, Neman, I will speak some words of truth concerning thee. Thine enemies shall find thee lying in the same bed with a harlot, and there shalt thou be slain. Demons

also will carry off thy soul to the places of punishments." This same Neman being found after some years in a couch of shame, in the district of Cainle, perished, beheaded by his enemies, according to the Saint's word.

## NOTE

*In the district of Cainle*

Called Mons Cainle in the next book, chapter xvii., but not identified.

## XL

## PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING A CERTAIN PRIEST.

At another time the Saint, when he was staying in the district of the Scots [Irish], mentioned a little above, by chance came on the Lord's Day to a certain little neighbouring monastery which is called in Irish, Trioit. The same day, hearing a presbyter celebrating the Holy Mysteries of the Eucharist—one whom the Brethren who lived there had chosen to perform the Solemnities of the Mass because they deemed him to be very religious, he suddenly utters from his mouth this fearful speech: "Clean things and unclean are now found mingled together; that is, the clean mysteries of the Holy Sacrifice are offered by an unclean man, who, meantime, is hiding in his conscience a certain great crime." Those who were present hearing this, stood amazed, greatly terrified. But he of whom these words were said was compelled to confess his fault in the

presence of all. And the fellow soldiers of Christ, who stood around in the church and heard the Saint making manifest the secrets of the heart, with great wonder glorified the Divine knowledge that was in him.

## NOTES

*Trioit*

Trevet, in the County Meath, near the church of Skreen, which was formerly called Scrin Coluimkille.

*The Holy Mysteries of the Eucharist . . . the Solemnities of the Mass . . . the clean mysteries of the Holy Sacrifice*

Sacra Eucharistiæ Mysteria . . . missarum sollemnia . . . munda sacræ oblationis mysteria : It would hardly be possible to express the Mass more plainly as the unbloody sacrifice of the New Law from the earliest times in the Church of Rome than is here done by St. Adamnan and St. Columba. Compare the prophecy of Malachi, chapter i. : “Ab ortu enim solis usque ad occasum magnum est nomen meum in gentibus, et in omni loco sacrificatur et offertur nomini meo *oblatio munda.*”

## XLI

PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
ERC MOCUDRUIDI, A ROBBER, WHO DWELT  
IN THE ISLAND COLOSO [COLONSAY].

At another time the Saint, dwelling in the isle of Iona, called two of the Brethren to him, whose names were Lugbe and Silnan, and giving them instructions, he said : “Pass over, now, to the Malean Isle [Mull], and in the fields near the sea seek out the robber Erc, who, last night, came

alone secretly from the island Coloso [Colonsay], and tries through the day to hide himself under his boat, covering it with hay among the sandhills, so that by night he may sail over to the little island where the sea calves, ours by right, are bred and breed ; that, greedy and very thievish as he is, he may fill his boat with them after savagely killing them, and go back to his dwelling." And they hearing these words, obediently go forth and find the robber hidden in the places indicated by the Saint, and as he had directed them they brought him to the Saint. And on seeing him the Saint says to him: "Why dost thou transgress the Divine command and often steal the goods of others? When thou art in want, come to us, and thou shalt receive the necessaries thou dost ask for." And saying these words, he ordered sheep to be killed and to be given to the wretched thief in place of the seals, lest he should return empty to his dwelling. And after some time the Saint, foreseeing in spirit that the death of the robber was at hand, sends to Baithene, at that time dwelling as prelate in the Plain of Lunge, to send to that same thief a fat sheep and six pecks of corn as a last gift. When these were sent over by Baithene, as the Saint had directed, on that day the wretched robber was found to have been overtaken by sudden death, and the presents sent over were used at his funeral.

## NOTES

*Mocudruidi*

Mac Ua Druidi : the tribe name of a family.

*The Malean Isle*

Mull, opposite Iona.

*The island Coloso*

The larger island of Colonsay.

*The little island where our sea calves breed*

Probably Erraid isle, south-east of Iona, and close to Mull. Sea calves—seals—“*marini vituli*”, are often seen on the islands, and were extensively used for food in the Hebrides down to the last century. Selsey, in Sussex, was anciently called “*Selæseu quod dicitur Latine Insula Vituli marini.*”

*The Plain of Lunge*

In the island of Tiree.

*The presents (xenia) were used at his burial*

i.e. at the funeral feast of Erc.

## XLII

PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
CRONAN, A BARD.

Another time, when the Saint was sitting one day with the Brothers near Lough Key, at the mouth of the river called in Latin Bos [Boyle], a certain Irish bard came to them, and when after some conversation he had gone away the Brothers say to the Saint: “When Cronan the bard was going away from us, why didst thou not ask him for some song to be tunefully sung after the manner of his art?” And the Saint says to them: “Wherefore do ye also now utter useless words? How could I ask for a song of joy from that

unfortunate fellow, who even now, killed by his enemies, has come so soon to the end of life?" No sooner had the Saint said these words, than behold from over the river a certain man shouts, saying: "That bard, who just returned safely from you, has in this very hour been slain by his enemies in the way." Then all who were present, greatly wondering, looked upon one another in amazement.

## NOTES

*Loch Key*

In the County Roscommon.

*The river called Bos*

The Boyle, running from Lough Key to the Shannon.

*A certain Irish bard*

The poets or bards were regarded by Irish historians as the representatives under Christianity of the old Pagan Magi or Druids. They were highly unpopular in Columba's time because of their exorbitant demands and their numbers. But for Columba the bards would have been suppressed at the Convention of Drumceatt in A.D. 575.

*Some song to be tunefully sung, after the manner of  
his art*

"Aliquod ex more suae artis canticum modulabiliter decantari": meaning, perhaps, a song accompanied on the harp.

## XLIII

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN AS TO TWO  
CHIEFTAINS, WHO DIED OF WOUNDS MUTU-  
ALLY INFLICTED.

Again, at another time, the Saint, while living in the isle of Iona, on a sudden, in the course of his reading, in great amazement sighed with a sorrowful sigh. Seeing which, Lugbe Mocublai, who was there present, began to ask of him the cause of his sudden grief. To whom the Saint, greatly sorrowing, gave this answer: "Two men of royal race in Ireland have just perished, pierced by wounds mutually inflicted, not far from the monastery which is called Cellrois, in the province of the Maugdorni; and on the eighth day, that is this day week, another man coming from Ireland will shout across the Sound, and will tell that these deeds have actually happened. But, O my little son, tell this to no man so long as I shall live." On the eighth day, accordingly, there was shouting over the Sound. Then the Saint, calling to him Lugbe, above mentioned, quietly says to him: "He who is now shouting over the Sound is he of whom I spoke to thee before; an aged traveller he is; go and bring him to us." And he, being quickly brought, related among other things this also, saying: Two men of noble birth, in the district of the Maugdorni, inflicting wounds on one another, have died; namely Colman, the Hound, son of Ailen, and Ronan, son of Aedh, son of Colga, of



the race of the Anteriores, near the bounds of those places where is to be seen that monastery which is called Cellrois."

After these words were spoken, the same Lugbe, soldier of Christ, began to question the Saint apart, saying: "Tell me, I beseech thee, about these so wonderful prophetic revelations, how they are manifested to thee, if by sight or by hearing, or in some other manner unknown to men." To these words the Saint replies: "Concerning this very subtle matter of which thou now askest, I shall not be able to give thee any, even the very least intimation, unless, first, on bended knees, thou wilt strictly promise me, in the name of the Most High God, that thou wilt communicate this most secret mystery to no man whatever all the days of my life." And he, then, hearing these words, immediately knelt down, and with face flat on the ground fully promised everything, according to the Saint's command. And this promise being promptly given, the Saint says to him as he rises: "Some there are, though very few, to whom Divine grace has granted this: that they can clearly and most distinctly see, at one and the same moment, as though under one ray of the sun, even the entire circuit of the whole world with its surroundings of ocean and sky, the inmost part of their mind being marvellously enlarged."

Although the Saint seems to relate this miracle as if it referred to others of the Elect, avoiding vain glory in every way, yet that, albeit indirectly, he was speaking of himself, no one ought to doubt

who reads Paul the Apostle, that chosen vessel, when he speaks of such visions revealed to himself. For he did not write thus: "I know myself", but: "I know a man caught up to the third heaven." Which, although he seems to say it of another, yet no one doubts that, watchful over his humility, he thus speaks of his own person. And him also our own Columba followed in the above-mentioned account of spiritual visions, which the aforesaid man, whom the Saint much loved, could scarcely draw from him after urgent entreaties; as he himself, after the passing of St. Columba, bore witness in the presence of other holy men, from whom, nothing doubting, we have faithfully learned these things above related concerning the Saint.

#### NOTES

##### *Two Chieftains*

"Tigernis," a Latin adaptation of the Irish word tigherna, a chieftain, a lord, from tig house, as dominus from domus.

##### *Lugbe Mocuylai*

Lugbe of the tribe Mac-Ua-Blae.

##### *The Monastery called Cellrois in the province of the Mughdorni*

Cellrois, now Magheross, in Monaghan. The Monastery is mentioned in the Annals of Ulster under the tribe name of Fer Rois. Mughdorn dubh gave his name to a territory in Monaghan, and from him the Mughdorni descended.

##### *Colman, the Hound*

Colman Canis. He is not mentioned by the Annalists. The term Cu, canis, often occurs in Irish names.

*Ronan, son of Aedh, son of Colga*

Ronan is not mentioned in the Annals, but the death of his father, Aedh, is recorded as having taken place in A.D. 609.

*Of the race of the Anteriores*

The Anteriores were the Airtheara, a tribe settled in Airghialla, in Ulster, afterwards East Oriel, or Uriel. Anteriores is used by Adamnan as equivalent of Orientales, and it is so used also in the Book of Armagh. "In this use of the word," says Reeves, "the writers had reference to the primary notion entertained by the Irish of the cardinal points, which supposed the face turned to the east, constituting this point the *anterior*." Hence the west was back; and the south and north right and left respectively.

*This most secret mystery*

"Obscurissimum Sacramentum." In chapter I. of this book, and in the third book, chapter vi., the word "sacramentum" signifies a solemn secret or deposit. And Hugo de S. Victor says: "Aliquando dicitur Sacramentum quasi sacrum secretum velut Sacramentum Incarnationis, et huiusmodi." In Bishop MacCarthy's edition, I find the following note on this passage: "If holy men here on earth can see all things that pass in this world concentrated, as it were, 'in one ray of light', how much more in the New Jerusalem 'that hath no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof'? It is strange how those who admit the truth of prophecy, and that God communicated to men a knowledge of the most hidden future events, can deny Him the power of making known to His angels and saints our secret thoughts and actions."

*I know a man caught up to the third heaven*

"It is not expedient for me, doubtless, to glory. I will come to the visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago—whether

in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body I cannot tell; God knoweth—such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Cor. xii. 1-2.) And the note on the passage in the “Speaker’s Commentary” says: “He shrunk from saying *I* was rapt, which would have seemed like a boast. His personal will was for the time so annihilated that he speaks of himself as though he were another and not himself.”

#### XLIV

##### CONCERNING CRONAN, A BISHOP.

At another time a certain stranger from the province of the Munimenses [Munster Men] came to the Saint, and in humility he disguised himself as much as he could, so that no one might know that he was a Bishop; but yet this could not be hidden from the Saint. For the next Lord’s Day, being bidden by the Saint to consecrate Christ’s Body according to custom, he calls the Saint so that, as two priests, they may break the Lord’s Bread together. The Saint thereupon, going up to the Altar, suddenly looking on his face thus addresses him: “Christ bless thee, Brother, break this bread alone with the episcopal rite, now we know that thou art a Bishop. Why hast thou hitherto tried so far to disguise thyself that the veneration due to thee by us might not be rendered?” And when the humble guest had heard this word of the Saint he was greatly astonished, and revered Christ in the Saint; and those who were there present, greatly marvelling, glorified the Lord.

## NOTES

*Cronan, a Bishop*

Colgan, in his "Acta Sanctorum" (p. 302).

*Munimenses*

The men of Munster.

*Bidden by the Saint*

According to the direction of the Councils of Carthage and of Arles: "ut peregrino episcopo locus sacrificandi detur."

*They may break the Lord's bread*

Either a special reference to the Eucharistic fraction, or a synonym for celebrating.

*The veneration due by us*

The superiority of Bishops is everywhere recognised by Columba. Innes says that "a greater respect was paid to bishops in the monastery of Iona, and a greater distinction made between them and priests in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, than in other churches of the Occident, either in those ages or ours. For by this relation it appears that in Ycolmkill (Iona) a priest, even the abbot St. Columba himself, looked upon a bishop as so far superior to him that he would not presume, even though invited, to celebrate the Holy Mysteries jointly with him." The Irish Church, says Reeves, seems to have coincided with the Spanish in its estimate of episcopal dignity, and, he adds, "the present narrative comes with greater weight, being written by one who was not only a priest himself, but was officially disqualified for the higher order."

## XLV

PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
ERNAN, A PRIEST.

Again, at another time, the venerable man sent over Ernan, a priest, an old man, his uncle, to the presidency of that monastery which he had founded in Hinba island many years before. And so when the Saint kissed and blessed him on his departure, he uttered this prophecy concerning him, saying: "I do not expect to see again alive in this world this my friend now departing." Accordingly the same Ernan, not many days afterwards afflicted by some ailment, was at his own desire carried back to the Saint, who, greatly rejoicing at his coming, started to meet him at the haven. Ernan himself, although with faltering footsteps, was attempting with joyous activity to walk from the landing place to meet the Saint. But when there was between the two a space of about twenty-four paces, he was overtaken by sudden death before the Saint could look upon his face in life, and fell to earth breathing his last; lest the word of the Saint should in any way be made void. Wherefore in the same place, before the door of the kiln, a cross has been fixed; and another cross stands to-day fixed in like manner where the Saint stood when he (Ernan) died.

## NOTES

*Ernan, a priest*

He was the brother of Æthna, St. Columba's mother. He is patron of Rath Noe, and the Irish Calendars

give August 18th as his feast-day. Ernan was one of the twelve followers of his saintly nephew.

*Hinba island*

Perhaps Eilean-na-Naoimh.

*The door of the kiln*

“Januam canabæ.”

*A cross has been fixed*

“Crux infixæ est.” It was the custom to mark with a cross the spot where any providential visitation took place. The cross called Maclean’s may mark the site. These commemorative crosses were fixed in a base, sometimes a millstone.

XLVI

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
A CERTAIN PEASANT’S LITTLE FAMILY

At another time also a certain peasant came among others to the Saint, then staying in the district which is called in Irish Coire Salchain; and when the Saint saw him coming to him in the evening he says, “Where dost thou dwell?” “I dwell,” says he, “in the district which borders upon the shores of the lake Crogreth.” “Barbarous marauders are now harrying that little province of which thou speakest,” says the Saint. On hearing which the unhappy peasant began to weep for his wife and children. And the Saint, seeing him greatly sorrowing, consoling him says: “Go, my good man, go; all thy little family has fled to the mountain and escaped; but indeed the

invaders have driven off with them all thy little herd, and likewise cruel robbers have carried off all thy household goods among their booty." Hearing this, the peasant returned to his country, and found all things had happened just as predicted by the Saint.

## NOTES

*Coire Salchain*

Probably in Scotland, the word Coire meaning a cul-de-sac in the mountains, being common in the Scotch Highlands and hardly known in Ireland. There are several Salchains, or Sallachans, and it is difficult to identify the particular locality mentioned in the narrative. Sallachan, in Morvern, called anciently Sallachan Corry, may have the best claim.

*The Lake Crogreth*

Nor has this lake been identified. It may be Loch Creeran, in Upper Lorne.

*My good man*

The original is "homuncule", one of the diminutives which Columba's kindly and paternal nature and his feelings as a priest prompted him continually to use, and which frequently occur throughout Adamnan's narrative.

## XLVII

A PROPHECY OF THE HOLY MAN CONCERNING  
A CERTAIN PEASANT, GUIRE BY NAME, SON  
OF AEDHAN.

At another time, again, a certain peasant, the bravest of all the men of that time among the people of Korkureti, makes inquiry of the Holy man by what death he is to be overtaken. To



whom the Saint says : "Not in battle, nor on the sea wilt thou die; the companion of thy journeyings, of whom thou hast no suspicion, will be the cause of thy death." "Perchance", says Guire, "some of my companion-friends may design to slay me; or my wife, for love of some younger man, may do me to death by foul play." "Not thus will it happen", says the Saint. "Wherefore", says Guire, "art thou unwilling to inform me now as to my slayer?" The Saint says : "I am unwilling to tell thee anything more plainly now concerning that thy baneful companion, for this reason : lest the frequent remembrance of it should sadden thee too much until the day comes in which thou shalt prove the truth of the thing."

Why delay we with words? After the passing of a few years, the same Guire above mentioned, sitting one day by chance beneath a boat, was smoothing down the point of his spear shaft with his own knife; when, hearing others fighting among themselves near by, he quickly gets up to part them from their fighting, and unwarily letting fall the same knife on the ground, in that sudden emergency he stumbled and his knee was severely gashed. And this kind of companion [namely, his knife] so acting, the cause of his death became manifest; whereupon he himself was greatly struck in his mind, and at once recognised the fact, according to the holy man's prophecy. And after some months he dies from the effect of that wound.

## NOTES

*The people of Korkureti*

Corkaree, in Westmeath, north of Mullingar, is believed to be the district here referred to.

*Smoothing down the point of his spear shaft*

“Cristiliam de hastili eradebat.” Mr. Fowler says, in his Glossary, s.v. *Cristilia*, that it is the sole recorded instance of the word.

## XLVIII

THE HOLY MAN'S AGREEABLE FOREKNOWLEDGE AND PROPHECY CONCERNING ANOTHER MATTER ALSO, WHICH, ALTHOUGH OF MINOR IMPORTANCE, IS NOT, I THINK, ONE ON WHICH THERE SHOULD BE SILENCE.

For at another time, when the Saint was living in the isle of Iona, calling one of the Brethren to him, he thus addresses him: “On the third day from this now dawning, thou must keep a look out in the western part of this isle, sitting on the sea-shore: for from the northern region of Ireland a certain guest, a crane, driven by the winds through long, circling aerial flights, will arrive very weary and fatigued after the ninth hour of the day; and its strength almost exhausted, it will fall and lie before thee on the shore, and thou wilt take care to lift it up kindly and carry it to a neighbouring house, and there wilt hospitably harbour it and attend to it for three days and three nights, and carefully feed it; at the end of the three days, refreshed, and unwilling to sojourn longer with

us, it will return with fully regained strength to the sweet region of Ireland whence it originally came. And I thus earnestly commend it to thee for that it came from the place of our own fatherland."

The Brother obeys, and on the third day after the ninth hour, as commanded, he awaits the coming of the expected guest ; and, when it comes, he raises it from the shore where it fell ; carries it, weak as it was, to the hospice ; feeds it in its hunger. And to him, on his return to the monastery in the evening, the Saint, not by way of inquiry, but of statement, says : "God bless thee, my son, because thou hast well attended our stranger guest ; and it will not tarry long in exile, but after three days will return to its country." And, just as the Saint predicted, the event also proved. For having been harboured for three days, raising itself on high by flight from the ground in presence of its ministering host, and considering for a little while its course in the air, it returned across the ocean to Ireland in a straight line of flight, on a calm day.

#### NOTES

##### *A certain guest, a crane*

Adamnan was surely right not to omit this charming incident, "though of minor importance", from his narrative. The Lives of the Irish Saints abound with references to their sympathy with and affection for birds. There are stories about the cranes in the Lives of SS. Finian and Ailbhe, and the narrative of the voyage of St. Brendan is full of marvels concerning birds. Stories of favourite animals and the love of animals occur in

the lives of the saints of every country. The lion of St. Jerome and the preaching of St. Francis to the birds at once occur to one's mind.

### XLIX

THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE BLESSED MAN CONCERNING THE BATTLE WHICH WAS FOUGHT MANY YEARS AFTER IN THE FORTRESS OF CETHIRN ; AND CONCERNING A CERTAIN WELL NEAR TO THAT PLACE.

At another time, after the Convention of the Kings at the Ridge of Ceate, namely Aedh, son of Ainmire, and Aidan, son of Galran, the blessed man was returning to the ocean plains, he and the abbot Comgell sit down, not far from the above-mentioned fortress, on a certain calm fine day in the summer time. Then water for the washing of their hands was brought to the Saints in a brazen vessel from a certain little fountain near by. And when St. Columba had received it, he thus speaks to the abbot Comgell, who sat at his side : "The day will come, O Comgell, when that little spring, from which the water now poured out has been brought to us, will not be fit for any human uses." "By what cause", says Comgell, "will the water of this spring be corrupted?" Then St. Columba says : "Because it will be filled with human gore ; for my kith and kin and thy relations according to the flesh, that is the Hy-Neill and the people of the Cruithni, will wage war fighting in this neighbouring fortress of Cethirn. Whence it will come about that in the aforesaid

spring some poor fellow of my kindred will be slain with the rest, and with his blood the basin of the same spring will be filled.”

And after many years this true prophecy of his was fulfilled in due time. And in that battle, as many people know, Domhnall, son of Aedh, came off victorious, and in the same spring, according to the holy man's prophecy, a certain man of his race was slain.

Another soldier of Christ, Finan by name, who for many years blamelessly led the life of an anchorite, near the monastery of Oakwood Plain, relating some things about the same battle, fought in his presence, declared to me, Adamnan, that he saw a dead body in the aforesaid spring, and that on the same day, on his return after the battle to the monastery of St. Comgell, which is called in Irish Cambas (whence he had set out), he there found two aged monks of St. Comgell, to whom, when he had narrated certain things concerning the battle fought in his presence and concerning the spring corrupted with human gore, they at once say: “A true prophet is Columba, who, as he sat near the fortress of Cethirn, announced many years beforehand in our hearing, in the presence of St. Comgell, that all these things, now fulfilled, which thou tellest of the battle and of the spring, would come to pass.

#### NOTES

##### *The fortress of Cethirn*

Dun Keithirn, named after Kethern, son of Fintan, of Ulster. It is now known as the “Giant's Sconce”, and

is near Coleraine. Reeves says: "The hill commonly called 'The Sconce' is the most conspicuous one in the neighbourhood of Coleraine, situate about four miles west of that town in the Parish of Dunhoe, on the old Newton Road. It is 797 feet above the level of the sea, and the top, which is a table measuring 160 feet by 94 feet, exhibits the remains of an ancient fortress. On the west and south the face of the hill is very precipitous; on the north and east it is less so, and at a lower level has a small semicircular platform formed by an expansion of the hill. On the north-east is a well, and on the south-east is the entrance to the fort, 5 feet wide, ascending abruptly by rude steps. On the north-east was a long gallery, formed against the side of the apex by large stones regularly laid with an inclination inwards and covered with cross-flags, 40 feet long by 2 broad, serving as a covered way and also as a breastwork on the accessible side. The whole crest of the hill was enclosed by a Cyclopean wall, of which some traces remain, though the mass of it has been precipitated down the sides, and either carried away for building purposes elsewhere or suffered to lie in debris at the foot. The remarkable gallery mentioned was disturbed and reduced to its present condition, which is little better than a great ridge of dry stones, by a person who about thirty years ago [i. e. about 1827] brought a number of men to the spot 'to search the cove for money', and with them a barrel of beer to stimulate their exertions."

#### *The Convention of the Kings at the Ridge of Ceatt*

The Convention was held in A. D. 575 at Drum Ceate, a long mound now known as the Mullagh, or "Daisy Hill," near Newtownlimavaddy, in Co. Londonderry. One of the main objects of the Convention was the abolition of the Bards. It was summoned by Aedh, son of Ainmire, King of Ireland at the time; Aidan, son of Galran, who was present, was Lord of the Scotch Dalriada in 574, and the founder of the supremacy of that race in Scotland. Aedh, as sovereign of Ireland, laid claim to the tribute and service of the Dalriada of

Scotland as an Irish colony bound to the mother country; Aidan, on the other hand, aspiring to independence. Hence the Convention. Skene, in his "Celtic Scotland" ii. 123, states that the Convention consisted of all the petty kings and heads of tribes, and of all the principal clergy of Ireland. Columba attended it accompanied by King Aidan, and by retinue who are thus described by the poet, Dallan Forgaill:—

Forty priests was their number.  
 Twenty bishops, noble, worthy  
 For singing psalms, a practice without blame;  
 Fifty deacons, thirty students.

The assembly was held not far from Columba's monastery of Derry, and no doubt this retinue would consist of persons taken from his Irish monasteries as well as of those who accompanied him from Iona. I have given in the introduction some account of Columba's participation in this famous Convention.

*The blessed man was returning to the ocean plains*

Derry was a point of communication with Iona. In coming to Drumceatt, Columba entered Lough Foyle, but in going to Scotland on this occasion he embarked at Coleraine.

*Abbot Comgell*

Founder and first abbot of Bangor in the Ards of Ulster; born 517, died 602.

*The Hy-Neill and the people of Cruithni*

"Nellis Nepotes et Cruthini populi": The Ui-Neill, Hy-Neill, or O'Neills, descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages, King of Ireland, 358-405. By his second wife he had Eoghan, Conall Gulban and other sons, and St. Columba was great-grandson of Conall Gulban. Domhnall, son of Aedh, who also descended from Conall Gulban, and who led the clans in the battle, was therefore among Columba's "family friends", as he said. The Cruithni were the Irish Picts or Dal-Araidhe, who held the southern half of Antrim and most of Down. Abbot Comgall was ninth in descent from Fiacha Araidhe,

founder of the race, and Congal Claen, who commanded the Dalaradians in this battle, was tenth in descent from the same individual.

*In that battle Domhnall came off victorious*

The battle of Dun Cethirn was fought in 629. The Annals of Ulster thus record it: "Bellum Duin Ceithirnn, in quo Congal Caech fugit et Domhnall Mac Aedo [Victor] erat: in quo cuidit Guaire mae Forindain."

*Another soldier of Christ, Finan by name, etc.*

There are many saints of the name. Colgan ("Acta Sanctorum") believes the Finan here mentioned to have been St. Finan Lobhar, who founded many monasteries in Munster and Leinster, and died in the reign of King Finachta, 674-693. Oakwood Plain is Durrow.

*Declared to me Adamnan*

Adamnan, born in 624, was in his fifth year at the date of the battle.

*The monastery called Cambas*

Founded by St. Comgall; called also Camas, or Camus, on the Bann River, two miles above Coleraine and four miles east of Dun Cethirn. All traces of the church, says Reeves, have disappeared, but an ancient sculptured cross or pillar, divided by transverse bands into four compartments, each containing three human figures in relief, stood on a base at the west side till 1760, when it was overturned, and having been mutilated, was converted into a gatepost for the churchyard, in which condition it still exists.



## L

HOW BY DIVINE GRACE THE HOLY MAN WAS  
INSPIRED TO DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN DIF-  
FERENT TRIBUTE GIFTS

At the same time Conall, Bishop in Coleraine, collected gifts of homage almost numberless from the people of the Plain of Eilne, and prepared a hospitable reception for the blessed man on his return, with a great multitude in his train, from the Convention of the above-mentioned kings. Then the numerous gifts of the people are laid out in the courtyard of the monastery for the holy man to bless them on his arrival. And when he was looking at them, blessing them the while, specially indicating the gift of a certain rich man, "The mercy of God," he says, "attends the man whose gift this is, for his pity for the poor and his liberality." And he also points out another present, among many others, saying, "Of this gift of a sage, who is also avaricious, I can in no wise taste, unless first he does true penance for the sin of avarice." On hearing this saying, which was quickly circulated among the crowd, Columb, son of Aedh, conscience-struck runs up, and does penance before the Saint on bended knees, and promises that he will henceforth renounce avarice, and that he will practise bounty and mend his ways. And, bidden by the Saint to rise, he was from that hour cured of the vice of niggardliness. For he was a sage, as had been revealed to the Saint through his gift. But

that rich and liberal man, Brendan by name, of whose gift mention has been made a little above, also hearing the Saint's words concerning himself, kneeling down at the Saint's feet prays that the Saint will pour forth prayer for him to the Lord. And he, after being first reproved by him for certain of his sins, being penitent, promised to amend thenceforth. And so each one was amended and cured of his sins.

With like insight the Saint also, at another time, recognised the gift of a certain grasping man, Diormit by name, among many gifts brought together against his arrival at the Great Cell Deathrib.

Let it suffice to have written in the text of this first book these things concerning the prophetic grace of the blessed man, being a few out of many. Few, I said, for there is no doubt in the case of the venerable man that many more were the secrets hidden within which could in no wise come to the knowledge of men, than those which, like some little tricklings, oozed out as it were through cracks in some vessel full of strongly fermenting new wine. For holy and apostolic men, shunning vain glory, are usually, and as far as they can be, quick to conceal certain secrets manifested to them inwardly by God. But God divulges some of these, whether they themselves will or no, and in some way brings them out, willing to honour the Saint who honours Him, that is the Lord Himself, to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Here, then, a close is put to this first book.

Now, following, begins the Book of his Miraculous Powers, with which, for the most part, is still coupled his prophetic foreknowledge.

## NOTES

*Conallus, Bishop in Coleraine*

“Conallus episcopus Culerathin”. There is no mention of Conall elsewhere. The Irish name of Coleraine is Cuil-rathain, meaning “fern-cover”.

*The people of the Plain of Eilne*

Magh Elne, between the Bush and the Bann rivers, the present north-eastern Liberties of Coleraine.

*In the courtyard of the monastery*

“In platea monasterii”. In Book III. chap. vi. the word is “plateola”. Not a vestige remains of the Abbey of Coleraine.

*Columb, son of Aedh*

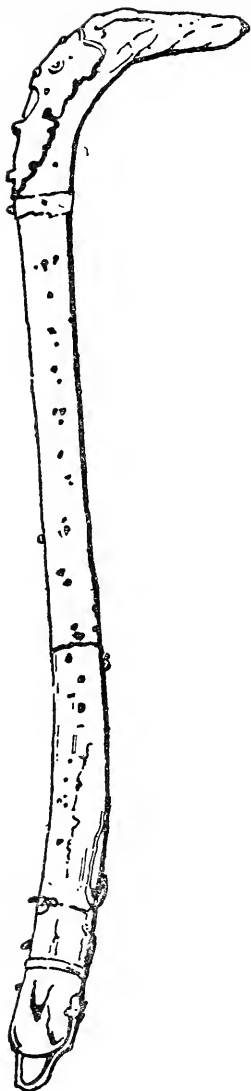
Described as a “wise man”, that is a sage or philosopher. His name and Columbus, Columbanus, Colman, and Columba are various forms of the same name.

*The Great Cell Deathrib*

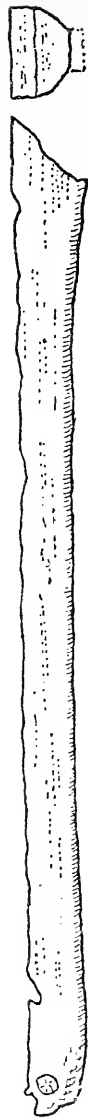
Kilmore, in Co. Roscommon, on the Shannon. It was founded by Columba before he left Ireland.



BOOK II



THE BACHUILL MOR ('BIG STAFF') OF SAINT MOLOC  
(SEE BOOK II. CHAP. XIV.)



ANCIENT BOAT, A 'DUG OUT', HOLLOWED TRUNK OF AN OAK TREE, FOUND AT BRIGG  
(SEE BOOK II. CHAP. XLV.)

STERN BOARD

THE SECOND BOOK,  
CONCERNING HIS MIRACULOUS POWER.

I

OF THE WINE THAT WAS MADE FROM WATER.

At another time, when the venerable man, as yet a youth, was staying in Ireland with St. Findbar [or Finnian], the bishop, learning the wisdom of Holy Writ, on a certain day of solemnity the wine for the Sacrificial Mystery, by some chance, was not found: and when he heard the ministers of the altar complaining among themselves of the want of it, he, as deacon, takes the cruet and goes to the spring to draw water for the ministrations of the Holy Eucharist; for in those days he was ministering in the order of the diaconship. So the blessed man in faith blessed the watery element which he drew from the spring, invoking the while the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who in Cana of Galilee turned water into wine: and He, working in this miracle also, the lower species, that is the watery one, was by the hands of the illustrious man changed into the more agreeable species of wine. And so the holy man returns from the spring, and entering the church sets down the said cruet containing the wine near the altar, and says to the ministers: "Here is wine for you, which the Lord Jesus has

sent for the celebration of His Mysteries." And this becoming known, the holy bishop and the ministers give great thanks to God. But the holy youth ascribed this not to himself, but to the holy bishop Vinnian. Thus Christ the Lord showed this first proof of miraculous power through His disciple, just as He wrought it by Himself, when he made a beginning of miracles in Cana of Galilee.

May this divine miracle, which was manifested through our Columba, shine like a lamp in the Introduction of this little book, so that we may then pass on to the other great miracles that were manifested through him.

#### NOTES

##### *St. Findbar, the bishop*

Probably St. Finnian, of Moville, who, with another abbot of the same name, Finnian of Clonard, in Meath, was one of the teachers of St. Columba. The ancient Irish Life of Columba refers to this very miracle as having occurred when the Saint was studying under Finden, i.e. Findbar, Finnian, of Movile.

##### *Water for the ministrations of the Holy Eucharist*

"Ad sacræ Eucharistiæ ministeria aquam." The water was, of course, for the mixed chalice, used by the early Irish Church as by all Christendom for the first 1500 years after Christ. The duty here performed by the deacon was usually done by the acolyte. The Fourth Council of Carthage prescribed that when an acolyte is ordained, "Accipiat et urceolum vacuum ad suggerendum vinum in Eucharistiam sanguinis Christi." For the mixed chalice see Justin Martyr, Irenæus, the Clementine Liturgy, and other authorities, ancient and modern.



*The more agreeable species, namely wine*

“Gratiorem videlicet vinalem speciem.” An early application of the term “species” to one of the Eucharistic elements.

## II

CONCERNING THE BITTER FRUIT OF A CERTAIN TREE TURNED INTO SWEET THROUGH THE SAINT'S BLESSING.

There was a certain tree laden with apples near the monastery of Oakwood Plain, in the southern part of it; and when the inhabitants of the place made some complaint of the excessive bitterness of the fruit, the Saint approached it one day in the autumn season, and seeing the tree in vain bore abundant fruits which injured more than delighted those tasting of them, he raised his holy hand in benediction, saying: “In the name of the omnipotent God, let all thy bitterness depart from thee, O bitter tree, and be thy apples, hitherto most bitter, now changed into very sweet ones.” Wonderful to say, quicker than speech, and in the same moment, all the apples of that tree lost their bitterness and were changed into a marvellous sweetness, according to the word of the Saint.

### NOTE

St. Mochoemoc performed a similar miracle, as narrated by Colgan in “Acta Sanctorum”, p. 593b.

## III

CONCERNING A CROP, SOWN AFTER MIDSUMMER AND REAPED IN THE BEGINNING OF THE MONTH OF AUGUST, AT THE PRAYER OF THE SAINT, WHILE HE WAS LIVING IN THE ISLE OF IONA.

At another time the Saint sent his monks to bring faggots from the little field of a certain peasant for the building of a hospice. And when they came back to the Saint with their freight-ship filled with the aforesaid cargo of twigs, and said that the peasant was very much distressed on account of the loss of them, the Saint at once gave orders and says : "Lest, therefore, we should be the cause of harm to that man, let there be taken to him from us twice three bushels of barley, and let him sow them immediately in ploughed land." And the bushels being sent to the peasant, Findchan by name, according to the Saint's command, and set down before him, with that direction, he thankfully accepted them, saying : "How can a crop come to any good sown after midsummer, contrary to the nature of this land?" His wife, on the other hand, says : "Do according to the Saint's command, to whom the Lord will grant whatever he may ask of Him." But the messengers also at the same time added this, saying : "Saint Columba, who sent us to thee with this gift, gave us also this command about thy crop, saying : 'Let that man trust in the omnipo-

tence of God ; his crop, although sown twelve days from the beginning of the month of June, shall be reaped in the beginning of the month of August.’”

The peasant obeys, ploughing and sowing ; and the crop, which he sowed against hope at the time above mentioned, he gathered in, ripe, in the beginning of the month of August, in that part of the land which is called Delcros, to the great amazement of all his neighbours, according to the word of the Saint.

## NOTES

*Faggots*

“Virgarum fasciculos” : for the wattle-work of which the houses and churches of the Celts were constructed in early times.

*Shall be reaped in the beginning of August*

In and around Iona barley is generally sown in June and reaped in September.

*Delcros*

Dealg-ros, promontory of thorns. It has not been identified.

## IV

## CONCERNING A PESTIFEROUS CLOUD AND THE HEALING OF MANY.

Again at another time, when the Saint was dwelling in the isle of Iona, sitting on the hill which is called in Latin *Munitio Magna* [Dunbhuirg], he sees in the north a dense and rainy cloud rising up from the sea on a clear day : and when

he saw it rising, the Saint says to a certain one of his monks sitting near him, by name Silnan, son of Nemandon Mocusogin: "This cloud will be very harmful to men and to cattle; and rapidly flying to-day over a great part of Ireland, that is, from the river called Ailbine [Delvin] as far as the ford Clied [Dublin], it will pour down in the evening a pestilential rain which will cause grievous and festering ulcers to be formed on the bodies of men and on the teats of cattle; and by these the sick men and cattle will suffer from that poisonous infection, even unto death. But we ought to have compassion on them, and to relieve their suffering, the Lord mercifully granting it. Thou, therefore, Silnan, come now down from the hill with me and prepare to sail to-morrow, life lasting and God willing, and take bread from me blessed with the invocation of God's Name, and on its being dipped in water, and men and cattle sprinkled with it, they will quickly regain their health."

Why linger we? On the morrow, the things necessary being quickly got ready, Silnanus took the blessed bread from the Saint's hand and sailed away in peace. And in that same hour that he departs from him the Saint adds this word of comfort to him, saying: "Be sure, my son, that thou shalt have fair and prosperous winds day and night until thou comest to that region which is called Ard-Ceannachte, that there thou mayest quickly relieve the sufferers with the health-giving bread."

Why say more? Silnanus, obedient to the Saint's

word, the Lord helping him, arrived after a prosperous and rapid voyage at the above-mentioned part of that region, and found the people of whom the Saint had foretold devastated by the pestilential rainfall of that swift cloud that preceded him. And in the first place six men in one house near the sea, whom he found in the last extremity, at the point of death, on being sprinkled by the same Silnan with the water of benediction, were opportunely cured that very day. And the rumour of this rapid cure, spread at once throughout all the district devastated by that pestilential disease, and summoned all the sick people to Saint Columba's legate, and he, according to the Saint's command, sprinkled men and cattle with water in which the blessed bread had been dipped, and the men forthwith recovered full health, and were saved with their cattle, and praised Christ in St. Columba with heartfelt thanksgiving.

In this above-written narrative, therefore, these two things, as I think, are manifestly and equally associated, namely, the gift of prophecy concerning the cloud and the great miracle in the healing of the sick. That in all respects these things are most true, the above-mentioned Silnan, Christ's soldier, the messenger of St. Columba, bore witness in the presence of Seghine, the abbot, and of other aged men.

## NOTES

*The hill . . . Munitio Magna*

Probably Dun-bhuirg, "the hill of the fortification", in the north-west of Iona. It commands a wide view

northwards, and on the summit are traces of a parapet such as often enclosed ancient forts in Ireland and Scotland.

*Silnan, son of Nemandon Mocusogin*

Silnan has already been mentioned in chapter xli. of Book I. Mocusogin is a clan name, Mocu Soghain, of the sons of Soghan, who was son of Fiacha Araidhe, founder of the Dal-Araidhe.

*The river Ailbine*

The Delvin, which runs between the counties of Dublin and Meath.

*The ford Clied*

Ath-Cliath, hurdle-ford, the ancient name of Dublin. Irish-speaking natives, says Fowler, still call Dublin Baile-Atha-Cliath, "the town of the ford of the hurdles".

*Ard-Ceannachte*

The height of the Cianachta, the descendants of Cian, slain in battle A.D. 240. In Meath.

V

CONCERNING MAUGINA, DAUGHTER OF DAIMEN,  
A HOLY VIRGIN WHO HAD DWELT IN CLO-  
CHER OF THE SONS OF DAIMEN.

At another time the Saint, when he was living in the isle of Iona, calling to him, at the first hour of the day, a certain Brother, Lugaid by name, whose surname is, in Irish, Lathir, thus addresses him, saying: "Prepare for a quick voyage to Ireland, for it is very necessary for me to send thee as messenger to Clocher of the Sons of Daimen. For in this past night, by some chance,

Maugina, a holy virgin, daughter of Daimen, returning home from the oratory after mass, has stumbled, and her hip-bone is broken in two. She, in her cries, often invokes my name, hoping from the Lord that she will receive consolation through me."

Why say more? Lugaid, obediently and forthwith departing, the Saint hands him, with a blessing, a little pinewood box, saying: "When thou comest to visit Maugina, let the blessed contents of this little box be dipped into a vessel of water, and the same blessed water be poured upon her hip; and immediately on the name of God being invoked, the hip-bone will be joined and knit together, and the holy virgin will recover perfect health." And the Saint adds this: "Behold, I in thy presence write on the cover of this box the number of twenty-three years, during which the sacred virgin is to live in this present life, after this same recovery of health." All which things were as completely fulfilled as predicted by the Saint; for as soon as Lugaid came to the holy virgin, when her hip was bathed with the blessed water as the Saint had recommended, the bone was knit together without any delay, and she was fully cured; and rejoicing at the coming of Saint Columba's messenger with great thanksgiving, she lived twenty-three years after her cure, according to the Saint's prophecy, persevering in good works.

## NOTES

Lugaid Lathir: Lathir means "strong."

*Clocher of the Sons of Daimen*

“Clocherum filiorum Daimeni”; in Irish, Clochair Mac Daimene; Clogher, where Saint Maccarthen founded a monastery by order of St. Patrick. The distinction “of the Sons of Daimen” was necessary, there being many places in Ireland in the names of which Clogher (= a stony place) is a component.

*Maugina*

Irish, Moghain. There are three virgins of the name in the Calendar commemorated Nov. 14, Dec. 9, Dec. 15. She whose day is Dec. 15, Moghain, Virgin of Cluain-boirean, is probably the one here mentioned.

*The blessed contents of this little box*

“Benedictio quæ in hac capsellula continetur.” It may have been “blessed bread.” In chapter vii. of this book *benedictio* is synonymous with *Eulogia*, which meant the bread presented to the priest at the Offertory and blessed (not consecrated) by him, for distribution by the deacon among those present at the mass. It is the “pain bénit” still blessed in many churches in France and elsewhere under the old name “eulogie.” The prayer for blessing this bread, as ordained by the Council of Nantes, A.D. 658, is, “Ut sit omnibus salus mentis et corporis atque contra omnes morbos tutamentum”—the precise object for which it is used here by St. Columba. *Capsella capsellula, capsula*, is the common name for the case in which relics and books were kept.

## VI

CONCERNING THE CURES OF VARIOUS DISEASES  
WHICH WERE PERFORMED AT DRUM CEATT.

The man of illustrious life, as has been narrated to us by witnesses, healed the maladies of divers sick people, by the invocation of the Name of



Christ, in those days when, proceeding to the Conference of the Kings at Drum Ceatt, he sojourned there for a short time. For many sick persons, believing, recovered perfect health, either by the stretching forth of his holy hand, or being sprinkled with water blessed by him, or even by the touch of the border of his cloak, or of anything—salt, for instance, or bread—that had received his benediction and been dipped in water.

## NOTE

*Conference of the Kings at Drum Ceatt*

In 575. See also Book I. chapter x.

## VII

CONCERNING A PIECE OF ROCK SALT, BLESSED BY THE SAINT, WHICH FIRE COULD NOT CONSUME.

Again, at another time Colgu, son of Cellach, asked and received from the Saint a piece of rock salt, blessed by him, for the benefit of his sister and nurse who was suffering from a very severe attack of ophthalmia. The same sister and nurse, receiving this blessed gift from her brother's hand, hung it on the wall over her bed; and by chance it happened that after some days the same village, with the little cottage of the above-mentioned woman, was entirely burned down by devastating flame. Wonderful to say, a small part of that wall remained standing uninjured after the whole house was burned, lest the holy man's blessed gift

hung on it should perish ; nor did the fire dare touch the two stakes upon which the piece of rock salt was hanging.

## NOTES

*Blessed gift*

“Eulogia,” and, a few lines further down, “Benedictio.” See note, chapter v.

*The two stakes*

These were the supports or uprights of the hurdle wall of the cottage. See note, chapter iii. of this Book.

## VIII

CONCERNING THE LEAF OF A BOOK, WRITTEN  
BY THE SAINT'S HAND, WHICH COULD NOT  
BE DAMAGED BY WATER.

Another miracle which was once performed by means of the opposite element should not, I think, be passed over in silence. For, the cycles of many years having rolled by after the blessed man's passing to the Lord, a certain youth fell from his horse into the river which is called Boend in Irish, and having sunk and died, remained under water twenty days. And as when he fell he had under his arm books enclosed in a leather satchel, so also was he found after the above-mentioned number of days, holding the satchel with the books between his arm and his side ; and when his dead body was brought to dry land and the satchel opened, among the leaves of other books, which were not only decayed but even rotten, there was found, dry

and in no wise decayed, just as if it had been laid up in a desk, a leaf written by the dear and holy fingers of St. Columba.

## NOTES

*The river Boend*

The Boyne.

*In a leather satchel under his arm*

Slung as shown on the Great Cross at Clonmacnoise.

“Books being so highly prized, as well as they might be, were kept in satchels of embossed leather (*polairi*) into which they would just fit; these had long straps by which they could be hung upon walls or round the neck under one arm. Such are the satchels of the Book of Armagh, of the Corpus Missal at Oxford, and of St. Moedoc’s Reliquary. Curzon found the books in the library of an Abyssinian monastery kept exactly in the same way (‘Monasteries of the Levant’), and the Corpus Satchel is very like an Ethiopic one at St. John’s College. The Irish had also larger satchels (*tiagha*) to hold a number of books.”—*Fowler*. The Book of Armagh belonged to Dr. Reeves, and he thus describes its case: “Of leather cases, the cover of the Book of Armagh is the most interesting example now remaining. It is formed of a single piece of strong leather 36 inches long and 12 broad, folded in such a way as to form a six-sided case, 12 inches long,  $12\frac{3}{4}$  broad, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  thick, having a flap which doubles over in front, and is furnished with a rude lock and eight staples for short iron rods to enter and meet at the lock. The whole outer surface, which has become perfectly black from age, is covered with figures and interlacings of the Irish pattern in relief. . . . At the upper corners of the sides are the remains of coarse straps, which were stitched on with leather thongs for slinging the case from the shoulder, like a modern post bag.

## IX

CONCERNING ANOTHER MIRACLE DONE IN  
SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES.

At another time, a Book of Hymns for the Week, written by the hand of St. Columba, together with the leather satchel in which it was enclosed, fell from the shoulders of a certain boy who slipped from a bridge and sank in a certain river of the district of the Lagenians [Leinster men]. This little book remained in the waters from the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord to the end of the Paschal season, and was afterwards found on the bank of the river by some women there walking, and carried in the same satchel, which was not only wet but even rotten, to a certain Iogenan, a priest, a Pict by nation, whose property it formerly was. And the same Iogenan, opening the satchel, found his little book sound and as clean and dry as if it had remained all that time in a desk and had never fallen in the waters.

But we have learned for certain from witnesses that other similar things happened in various places with regard to books written by the hand of St. Columba, which books could by no means decay when left in the water. Concerning this very above-mentioned book of Iogenan, we have received the account without any ambiguity from certain truthful and unexceptionable men of good repute who inspected the same little book, which after all those days under water, as above stated, was quite white and bright.

These two miracles, though done in matters of small moment, and shown through opposite elements, namely, fire and water, bear witness to the honour of the blessed man, and of how great and rare a merit he was held by the Lord.

## NOTES

*Book of Hymns*

Hymns for the office of every day in the week. "We have no collection remaining to answer the present description, but there are abundant materials for an Irish Hymnal in the Antiphony of Bangor, the *Leabhar Breac*, Mone's *Hymni Medii Aevi*, and the *Liber Hymnorum* of Trinity College, Dublin."—*Reeves*.

*A Pict by nation*

Dalaradia, in the north-east, was the proper region of the Picts in Ireland. Here we find one a priest, in Leinster. "No fact in the pagan history of Ireland", says Bishop MacCarthy, "is more certain than that the whole country was originally held by the Irish Picts or Irians."

*Could by no means decay*

This power of resisting injury by water was believed to lie in the writings of the early Irish Saints—St. Kieran, St. Cronan, St. Finnian, St. Aidan and others.

## X

CONCERNING WATER WHICH, BY PRAYER OF THE SAINT, WAS BROUGHT FORTH FROM THE HARD ROCK.

And because mention has been made a little above of the element of water, we ought not to be silent as to other miracles also, which the Lord wrought through the Saint in the case of the same created thing, although at different times and places.

For at another time, when the Saint was on one of his journeys, an infant is presented to him by its parents for baptism as he goes on his way; and because in the neighbouring places there was no water to be found, the Saint, turning aside to the nearest rock, prayed a little while on bended knees, and rising up after prayer blessed the brow of the same rock, from which thereupon water bubbled up and flowed forth abundantly, and in it he at once baptized the infant. And concerning the child thus baptized, he prophesied, and spoke these words saying: "This little boy will be long lived, even to extreme old age. In his youthful years he will be slave enough to carnal desires; and thereafter, devoted to Christian warfare to his life's end, he will depart to the Lord in a good old age." All which things happened to the same man according to the Saint's prophecy. This was Lugucencalad, whose parents were in Artdaib Muirchol, where even at the present day there is a health-giving well called after St. Columba.

## NOTES

*The same created thing*

"For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it be used with thanksgiving" (1 Tim. iv. 4). The expression occurs in the Roman Ritual in the rite for blessing salt and water.

*Lugucencalad*

Lugucen, a diminutive of Lugu and Caladh, "of the ferry."

*Artdaib Muirchol*

Ardnamurchan, in northern Argyle.

## XI

CONCERNING ANOTHER SPRING, A NOXIOUS ONE, WHICH THE HOLY MAN BLESSED IN THE COUNTRY OF THE PICTS.

At another time, when he was sojourning for some days in the province of the Picts, the blessed man hears that a report was spread abroad among the heathen people concerning another spring, which foolish men, whose senses the devil had blinded, worshipped as a god. For those who drank of the same spring, or purposely washed hands or feet in it, were smitten by demoniacal power, God so permitting it, and returned either leprous or purblind, or else weak, lame, or beset by some other maladies ; on account of all which things the heathens, led astray, paid divine honour to the spring. On coming to the knowledge of these things, the Saint one day goes boldly up to the spring ; and, seeing this, the Druids, whom he himself had often sent away abashed and vanquished by him, greatly rejoiced, thinking that he would suffer the like things from contact with that noxious water. But he, first raising his holy hand with invocation of the name of Christ, washes his hands and feet ; then, with his companions, drinks of the same water he had blessed. And from that day the demons departed from that spring, and not only was it not permitted to injure any one, but also after its being blessed by the Saint and his washing in it many diseases among the people were cured by the same fountain.

## NOTE

*Worshipped as a divinity*

This was prohibited by the Canons. In the penitential canons at the end of the *Missal* of St. Columbanus, it is laid down, "Si quis ad arbores vel ad fontes votum voverit, tres annos preniteat, quia hoc sacrilegium est". And in the prayer for blessing a well it is prayed, "Ut aquam putei huius ad communis vitæ utilitatem coelesti benedictione sanctifices, ut fugato ea omni diaboli tentationis seu pollutionis incursu quicumque ex ea deinceps biberit benedictionem Domini nostri Jesu Christi percipiat."

## XII

CONCERNING THE BLESSED MAN'S DANGER ON  
THE SEA, AND THE SUDDEN CALMING OF  
THE TEMPEST WHEN HE PRAYED.

At another time, the holy man began to be in peril at sea, for the whole hull of the ship was heavily struck, and violently tossed about on huge masses of waves, a great storm of wind everywhere driving upon them. Then, by chance, the sailors say to the Saint, as he tried with them to empty the bilge-hole: "What thou art now doing will not help us much in our danger; thou shouldst rather pray for us, perishing as we are." On hearing this he ceases to empty out the greenish briny bilge-water, but begins to pour forth sweet and fervent prayer to the Lord. Wonderful to say, at the same moment of time, as the Saint, standing in the bows with hands outstretched to heaven, prayed to the Almighty, the whole storm of wind and fury of the sea were stilled, and ceased



sooner than it takes to tell it, and instantly an absolute calm ensued. But they who were in the ship were amazed, and rendering thanks with great wonder, glorified the Lord in the holy and illustrious man.

### XIII

#### CONCERNING ANOTHER LIKE PERIL OF HIS AT SEA.

At another time also, at the height of a furious and dangerous storm, when his companions cried out that the Saint should pray to the Lord for them, he made to them this reply, saying: "On this day it is not for me to pray for you in the danger in which you are placed, but for the holy man, the Abbot Cainnech." I am about to relate wondrous things. At that same hour, the Holy Spirit revealing it, Saint Cainnech, living in his monastery, which is called in Latin *Campulus Bovis*, but in Scotie [Irish] *Ached-bou*, heard with the internal ear of his heart the above-mentioned saying of St. Columba; and when just after the ninth hour he had begun to break the blessed bread in the refectory, he hurriedly leaves the table, and with one shoe clinging to his foot, and the other, on account of his great haste, left behind, he goes hurriedly to the church, saying as he goes: "It is no time for us to dine now when the ship of St. Columba is in danger at sea. For at this moment he is woefully calling upon the name of this Cainnech that he may pray to Christ for him and his companions in

peril." After these his words, having entered the oratory, he prayed for a little while on bended knees ; and the Lord, hearing his prayer, the storm immediately ceased and the sea became quite calm. Then, next, St. Columba seeing in spirit Cainnech's hastening to church, though he was living far away, wonderfully utters this word from his pure breast, saying : " Now know I, O Cainnech, that God has heard thy prayer ; now does thy rapid race to the church with one shoe greatly profit us." In such a miracle as this, therefore, the prayer of both Saints, as we believe, contributed to the result.

## NOTES

*St. Cainnech*

Born 517, died 600. Called in Scotland Kenneth, a famous saint, native of Keenaght, in Co. Londonderry, where was his principal church Drumachose.

*Campulus Bovis*

Ached-bou, now Aghaboe, in Queen's County.

*The blessed bread*

Eulogiam: see the notes to ch. v. and vii. Bishop MacCarthy says that it is here taken as part of the refection or dinner, or perhaps the whole dinner, sanctified by the ordinary grace or blessing. The hour for dinner varied in different Orders and according to the different seasons. The hour of None, i.e. 3 p.m., was the refection hour on fast days from Pentecost to September for the Benedictines, and from September to Lent that was the hour for every day.

## XIV

CONCERNING THE STAFF LEFT BY ST. CAINNECH  
AT THE HARBOUR.

At another time, the same Cainnech above mentioned, when about to sail from the harbour of Iona to Ireland, forgot to take his staff with him ; which staff of his, indeed, was found on the seashore after his departure and given into the hand of St. Columba, who, on his return home, carries it into the oratory, and there for a long time he remains alone in prayer. Cainnech then approaching the Oidechan island [Islay], was suddenly inwardly struck with grief at his forgetfulness. But after some little time, landing from the ship and bending his knees in prayer on the shore, he found before him on the turf of the little land of Aithche the staff which he had forgotten and left behind him at the haven of Iona. And he wondered greatly with thanksgiving to God at its being thus transported by the Divine power.

## NOTES

*The Staff (Baculum) of St. Cainnech*

Two ancient Celtic staffs or croziers have survived to our day, the crozier of St. Fillan, long preserved at Strathfillan, in Perthshire, and that of St. Moluoc, or Moloc, of Lismore, Ireland, now in possession of the Duke of Argyle. Both are described by Dr. Daniel Wilson in his "Prehistoric Annals of Scotland" (ed. 1863, II. 477.) Dr. Wilson says: "After being preserved for centuries in the immediate vicinity of the Cathedral of Lismore, it has recently come into the possession of the

Duke of Argyle. It is known in the district by the simple name of the Bachuill More, or big staff, and consists of a plain curved staff, long since spoiled of its costlier ornaments, and retaining only a few of the rivets and some fragments of the copper of its metal casing. The right of its curatorship was hereditary, and conferred on its holders the popular title of Barons of Bachuill and the possession of a small freehold estate." (See illustration on p. 98.)

*The Oidechan island*

Called, further on in the chapter, the "little land of Aithche"; probably the southern part of the island of Islay.

XV

CONCERNING BAITHENE AND COLUMBAN, SON OF BEOGNA, HOLY PRIESTS, WHO ASK THAT ON THE SAME DAY A FAVOURABLE WIND MAY BE GIVEN THEM BY THE LORD THROUGH THE PRAYER OF THE BLESSED MAN, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE SAILING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS.

At another time also, the above-mentioned holy men, coming to the Saint together at the same time, ask of him that he will beg and obtain for them from the Lord a favourable wind on the morrow, as they were to set out in different directions. To whom the Saint replying gave this answer: "Tomorrow morning, Baithene, sailing out of the haven of Iona, will have a favourable wind until he reaches the port of the Plain of Lunge (in Tiree)." Which the Lord so granted, according to the Saint's word; for on that day Baithene crossed with full sails all the great sea to the Ethican land (Tiree).

But at the third hour of the same day the venerable man calls to him Columbanus, the priest, saying: "Now has Baithene arrived safely at the desired port; prepare thyself to sail to-day; the Lord will soon change the wind to the north." And at the same hour the south wind, obeying the word spoken by the blessed man, changes into a northerly wind; and so on the same day each of the holy men, the one quitting the other in peace, sailed forth with full sails and favourable breezes, Baithene in the morning to the Ethican land, Columban in the afternoon making for Ireland. This miracle was done, the Lord granting it, by the power of the illustrious man's prayers, for, as it is written, "All things are possible to him that believeth."

After the departure of Columban, on that day Saint Columba spoke concerning him this prophetic word: "The holy man Columban, whom we blessed on his departure, will nowhere in this world see my face again." Which so afterwards fell out; for in that same year [A.D. 595] Saint Columba passed away to the Lord.

#### NOTES

##### *Columban the priest*

This was Colman Ela, or Colmanellus, born in Glenelly, Co. Tyrone, 555, who died in his monastery of Lynally, near Tullamore, King's County, 611. In the title of Book I. chapter v. he is called bishop.

## XVI

CONCERNING THE EXPULSION OF A DEMON  
THAT LURKED IN A MILK PAIL.

At another time a certain youth, Columban by name, of the race of Briun, came suddenly, and stood at the door of the hut in which the blessed man was writing. He was returning from milking the cows, carrying on his back a pail full of new milk, and speaks to the Saint, that according to custom, he might bless this burden. The Saint lifts his hand from a distance and traces over against him the Saving Sign in the air, which thereupon became greatly agitated, and the bolt of the lid was driven through its two sockets and shot far away; the lid fell to earth, and the greater part of the milk was spilled on the ground. The lad then sets down the pail on the ground, with what little milk remained at the bottom, and bends his knees to pray. And to him the Saint says: "Rise, Columban; thou hast acted negligently in thy task to-day, for thou hast not cast out the demon that was lurking at the bottom of the empty pail by making on it the Sign of the Lord's Cross before pouring in the milk; and now he is unable to endure the power of that sign and takes himself off in terror, the whole pail being at the same time shaken, and the milk spilled. Bring hither the pail, therefore, nearer to me, that I may bless it." And this being done, the partly-empty pail which the Saint had blessed was in the same moment

filled by Divine power, and the little which had before remained at the bottom of the pail, under the blessing of his holy hand quickly increased until it rose to the top.

## NOTES

*The bar of the lid*

“Gergenna operculi”, the wooden crossbar which fastened down the lid. Pails of this kind are still used in the north of Ireland.

*The demon that lurked at the bottom*

Bishop MacCarthy calls attention to the commentary of St. Jerome on the 6th chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, in which he says that, “it is the opinion of all the learned that this air which divides heaven and is called ‘the void’ is full of powers adverse to man”. So great was the authority of St. Jerome in the Primitive Irish Church, that any opinion contrary to his on Scriptural questions was regarded almost as heresy.

## XVII

[Concerning a certain spell practised by a sorcerer, by means of diabolical art, at the house of a rich countryman, Foirtgirn by name, who lived in Mount Cainle, which was reprovved and counteracted by the blessed man.]

## XVIII

## CONCERNING LUGNE MOCUMIN.

One day a certain youth of good disposition, Lugne by name, who afterwards when an old man

was prelate in the monastery of the island Elena, coming to the Saint, complains of a flow of blood which for many months had often poured profusely from his nostrils. And, having asked him to come nearer, the Saint blessed him, pressing both his nostrils with two fingers of his right hand. And from the hour of that blessing even to his last day blood never came from his nose.

## NOTE

*The island Elena*

Perhaps Eilean na Naoimh, Holy Island, one of the Garvelock Isles, north-west of Scarba. Many remains upon it give evidence of its early importance as an ecclesiastical establishment. "The crowd of low buildings", says Mr. Cosmo Innes, "has all the appearance of a monastic establishment, and if it was so these are perhaps the oldest vestiges of the sort now standing in Scotland." Mr. T. Muir says that Eilean Naomh has the enviable reputation of being closely connected by common tradition with St. Columba, who is said to have often visited and resided on the island while prosecuting his missionary labours." Dr. Reeves thinks Eilean Naomh may be the Hinba island mentioned in chapter xxi. of Book I. and elsewhere.

## XIX

CONCERNING FISHES SPECIALLY PREPARED BY  
GOD FOR THE BLESSED MAN.

At another time, when some hardy fishermen, companions of the Saint, had taken five fishes in a net in the fish-abounding river Sale, the Saint says to them again: "Cast your net again in the



river, and immediately you will find a large fish which the Lord has prepared for me." And they, obeying the Saint's word, drew up in the net a salmon of wonderful size, prepared for him by God. At another time, also, when the Saint was staying for some days near Lough Key, when his companions desired to go fishing he prevented them, saying: "To-day and to-morrow no fish will be found in the river; I will send you on the third day, and you will find two large river salmon caught in the net." And so, after two short days, casting the net they drew to land two of very uncommon size, which they found in the river Bo (Boyle).

In these two fishings that have been mentioned the power of miracle appears, accompanied at the same time by prophetic foreknowledge; for which things the Saint and his companions gave fervent thanks to God.

#### NOTES

##### *The river Sale*

Either the Blackwater in Meath, anciently Sale, or Sele, or the Shiel in Scotland flowing out of Loch Shiel. See chapter xlv. of this Book.

##### *Lough Key*

County Roscommon.

##### *The river Bo*

The Boyle, which joins the Shannon near St. Columba's church of Kilmore.

## XX

CONCERNING NESAN, THE CROOKED, WHO LIVED  
 IN THE REGION BORDERING ON LAKE  
 APORUM (LOCHABER).

This Nesan, though he was very poor, on one occasion joyfully received the holy man as his guest. And when he had entertained him as hospitably as his means would afford for the space of one night, the Saint asks him how many little cows he had. "Five", says he. The Saint then says, "Bring them to me, that I may bless them." And they, being brought and blessed with his holy hand uplifted: "From this day forth", says the Saint, "thy few little cows, five only, shall increase to the number of a hundred and five cows." And because the same Nesan was a man of humble birth, with wife and children, the blessed man conferred on him also this blessing in addition, saying: "Thy seed shall be blessed in children and in grandchildren." All which things were completely fulfilled according to the Saint's word without any short coming.

[In a manuscript of the fifteenth century in the British Museum, one of the Royal Collection, No. 8D. ix., the following is here added]:—

On the other hand, concerning a certain rich but very niggardly man, Uigene by name, who had despised St. Columba, and had not received him as guest, he uttered this prophetic sentence, saying: "But the riches of that miser, who has

contemned Christ in the strangers seeking his hospitality, from this day shall gradually decrease and shall be reduced to nothing ; and he himself shall beg ; and his son shall go about from house to house with a half-empty wallet ; and he shall be struck by some rival with an axe in the pit of a threshing floor and die." All which things in both cases were completely fulfilled, according to the prophecy of the holy man.

## NOTE

*Lake Aporum*

Lochaber. The name, says Reeves, has departed from its primary application, and does not now belong to any sheet of water so as to answer the description in the text. Part of Loch Eil, an inlet of the sea, was probably the Loch Abor of early times. So Lochnagar in Aberdeenshire is now the name of a mountain only.

## XXI

CONCERNING COLUMBAN, A MAN OF EQUALLY HUMBLE CONDITION, WHOSE VERY FEW CATTLE THE HOLY MAN BLESSED ; BUT AFTER HIS BENEDICTION THEY INCREASED TO THE NUMBER OF ONE HUNDRED.

At another time again, the blessed man was well received one night as a guest by the above-mentioned Columban, at that time a poor man, and the first thing in the morning the Saint, as has been related above in the case of Nesan, asks his peasant host as to the quantity and quality of his possessions. And he, thus questioned, says : " I have only five little cows, which, if thou wilt

bless them, will increase to more." And, at the Saint's command, he immediately brought them, and, in the same manner as has been said above as to the five little cows of Nesan, equally blessing the five little cows of this Columban, he says: "By the gift of God thou shalt have a hundred and five cows, and there shall be on thy children and grandchildren an abundant blessing." All which things, according to the blessed man's prophecy, were most abundantly fulfilled in his lands and cattle and offspring; and in a wonderful manner the number determined by the Saint for both the afore said men was completed, to the number of one hundred and five cows, and could not in any way be added to: for those that were in excess of the limited number were carried off by various accidents and nowhere appeared, except in so far as anything might be expended for the personal use of the family, or else in the work of almsgiving.

In this narrative, therefore, as in others, the power of miracle is clearly shown, together with prophecy: for in the great multiplication of the cows appears equally the virtue of blessing and of prayer, and in the predetermination of the number prophetic foreknowledge.

## NOTE

*Little cows*

"*Vacculæ*" and "*boculæ*". Throughout Adamnan's work diminutives are constantly used, and these in most cases are used in a sense of endearment, difficult to convey in English, perfectly natural as they are in the

mouth of the kindly and warm-hearted Irish Saint. In the present case, Dr. Reeves thinks, the diminutives may indicate the poorness of the animals from the little there was to feed them upon.

## XXII

CONCERNING THE DEATH OF WICKED MEN WHO  
HAD MOCKED THE SAINT.

The venerable man greatly loved the above-mentioned Columban, and the virtue of his blessing had made him rich from having been poor, for he had rendered to him many acts of kindness. Now there was at that time a certain man, an evil-doer, a persecutor of good men, Ioan by name, son of Conall, son of Domhnall, sprung from the royal race of Gabran. This man persecuted the aforesaid Columbanus, the friend of St. Columba, and acting with hostility devastated his homestead, not once only, but twice, carrying off all he could find in it. Whence by chance it happened, and not undeservedly, to this wicked man, that a third time, after a third plundering of that home, while returning to the ship with his comrades laden with spoil, he met the blessed man drawing near to him whom, when he was at a distance, he had despised. And when the Saint reproached him for his evil deeds, and begged and besought him to set down the plunder, he in his churlishness and stubbornness despised the Saint, and boarding his ship with the booty mocked and sneered at the blessed man. And the Saint

followed him as far as the sea, and walking into the crystal waters up to his knees, with both hands raised to heaven, earnestly prays to Christ, who glorifies His elect that glorify Him. Now that harbour in which, thus standing, he prayed to the Lord after the departure of the oppressor, is at the place which is called in Irish Ait-Chambas Art-Muirchol [Camus-an-Gaal Ardnamurchan].

Then the Saint, his prayer ended, returns to the dry land and sits down with his companions on rather high ground; and in that hour he utters to them very terrible words, saying: "This churl who has despised Christ in His servants will never return to the harbour from which, in your presence, he has just set forth; but neither will he arrive with his wicked accomplices at the other shores which he seeks, for he will be forestalled by sudden death. To-day a furious storm, which ye will soon see arising out of a cloud in the north, shall overwhelm him with his comrades, nor shall even one of them survive to tell the tale."

After waiting a very little while, on the calmest of days, lo! a cloud, rising as the Saint had said from the sea, bursts with a great squall of wind, and finding the robber with his spoil between the islands of Mull and Colonsay, suddenly plunged him into the midst of the raging sea: nor did even one of them who were in the ship escape, according to the Saint's word; and in a wonderful manner, while all around the whole sea remained calm, did one such storm drown and sink the pirates into hell in miserable but well-deserved ruin.

## NOTES

*Ioan, son of Conall . . . of the royal race of Gabran*  
 Gabhran was king of the Scotie Dalriada in 558.

*Ait-Chambas Art-Muirchol*

There is a place called Camusnangel in Ardnamurchan, the peninsula on the northern boundary of Argyleshire.

## XXIII

CONCERNING A CERTAIN FERADACH, CARRIED  
OFF BY SUDDEN DEATH.

At another time again, the holy man specially entrusted and commended to the hand of one Feradach, a rich man, who lived in the Ilean Isle [Islay], that he might live for some months in his retinue as one of his friends, a certain exile of a noble Pictish family, Tarain by name. But after receiving him from the hand of the holy man, commended with such a recommendation, after a few days he acted treacherously and cruelly ordered him to be slain.

And when this monstrous crime was told to the Saint by fellow-travellers, he thus replied: "Not to me, but to God, has that unhappy wretch lied, and his name will be blotted out from the Book of Life. These words we are now speaking in the middle of summer time; but in the autumn, before he shall taste of swines' flesh fattened on the fruit of trees, he shall be overtaken by a sudden death and carried off to the Infernal Regions." When this prophecy of the holy man

was announced to the miserable wretch, he despised it and scoffed at the Saint. And after some days of the autumn months a sow, fattened on nut-kernels, is killed by his order, before any other swine of the same man's had yet been slaughtered; he orders that its entrails be immediately taken out, and a piece quickly roasted for him on the spit, so that in his impatience to taste of it he might bring to naught the holy man's prediction. And as soon as it was roasted he asked for the least little morsel to be given him to taste; and before he could raise to his mouth the hand he had stretched forth to take it, he breathed his last and fell dead on his back. And they who saw and heard were greatly terrified and astonished, and gave glory to Christ and honoured Him in His holy prophet.

## XXIV

CONCERNING A CERTAIN OTHER WICKED MAN,  
A PERSECUTOR OF THE CHURCHES, WHOSE  
NAME IS CALLED IN LATIN "MANUS  
DEXTERA."

At another time the blessed man, when staying in the island Hinba, began to excommunicate other persecutors of the churches, namely, the sons of Conall, son of Domnaill, of whom one was Ioan, of whom we have made mention above [in chapter xxii.], a certain wicked companion of theirs, at the instigation of the devil, rushed forth



with a spear to kill the Saint. To prevent this one of the Brethren, Findluga by name, who was ready to die for the holy man, put himself in their way clad in the Saint's cowl. But in a wonderful manner this garment of the blessed man, like some very strong and impenetrable coat of mail, could not be pierced by the strong thrust of the sharpest spear by however strong a man, but remained scatheless, and he who was clad in it was untouched and safeguarded by such a shield. But that ruffian, called Manus Dexter, returned back believing that he had transfixed the holy man with his spear.

After a full year from that day, when the Saint was living in the island of Iona, he says: "To-day is a full year since the day on which Lamh Dess, so far as he was able, killed Findluga in my stead; but he himself, as I think, is being killed in this hour." Which according to the revelation of the Saint was done at the same moment in that island which in Latin may be called Longa [Luig], where in some fight between two factions Lamh Dess alone was slain, being transfixed by the javelin of Cronan, son of Baithene, hurled, as is said, in the name of St. Columba. And after his death the men ceased fighting.

## NOTES

"*Manus Dexter*"

Further on his name is given in Irish, Lamh Dess.

*Findluga*

St. Finnloga, Finlagan. The church which com-

memorates him is Tamlaght-Finlagan, near Newtownlimavaddy, Co. Londonderry. In the island of Islay are a loch, an island, and a chapel named after this Saint.

*Coat of mail*

“Lorica.” This was the mail hauberk of interlaced rings.

*Longa Island*

Luing, near Scarba.

XXV

CONCERNING ANOTHER MAN, ALSO A PERSECUTOR OF THE INNOCENT.

When the blessed man, as yet a young deacon, was living in the district of the Lagenians [Leinster] learning divine wisdom, it happened one day that a certain man, a savage, cruel persecutor of the innocent, was pursuing a certain young girl (who was fleeing from him) on the level plain. And when by chance she saw the old man Gemman, the tutor of the above-mentioned young deacon, reading on the plain, she ran straight to him as fast as she could. And he, startled by so sudden an occurrence, calls Columba, who was reading at a distance, so that both, so far as they could, might defend the girl from her pursuer. But he immediately coming up, and without doing them any reverence, slew the girl under their cloaks with a lance, and, leaving her lying dead about their feet, turned to go away. The old man thereupon, deeply afflicted, turning to Columba, says: “For how long, O holy youth, Columba, to our disgrace, will

God, the just Judge, allow this crime to be unavenged?" The Saint thereupon pronounced this sentence upon the criminal himself, saying: "In the same hour in which the soul of the girl he has slain mounts to heaven, the soul of the slayer himself shall sink to hell." And quicker than it takes to tell it, with the very word, like Ananias before Peter, so also that slayer of the innocent, before the eyes of the holy youth, fell dead on the spot. The news of this sudden and terrible vengeance was at once spread abroad through many districts of Ireland, together with the wonderful fame of the holy deacon.

Let it suffice to have said this much concerning these terrible vengeance on his adversaries. Now we will relate some few things concerning wild beasts.

#### NOTES

##### *The innocent*

"Innocentium": a term often applied to women and children.

##### *The old man Gemman . . . tutor*

He is referred to in the Life of St. Finnian of Clonard ("Acta Sanctorum") as a Christian Bard, and an inhabitant of the plain of Meath, where probably the event narrated in this chapter occurred. He was brought into communication with St. Finnian, whose church was the principal one in the territory.

## XXVI

CONCERNING A WILD BOAR DESTROYED  
THROUGH HIS PRAYER.

At another time, while the blessed man was staying for some days in the island of Skye, and alone, rather far away from the Brethren, for the sake of prayer, entering a thick wood he met a boar of extraordinary size, which the hounds happened to be chasing. And seeing him from a distance, the Saint stood still watching him. Then, invoking the name of God, and raising his holy hand, with earnest prayer he says to him: "Come no further in this direction; on the spot to which thou hast now come, die!" As the sound of the Saint's word rang in the woods, not only was the terrible wild beast unable to approach further, but quickly at once, before his very face, fell down killed by the power of his word.

## XXVII

CONCERNING THE REPULSE OF A CERTAIN  
AQUATIC MONSTER BY VIRTUE OF THE  
BLESSED MAN'S PRAYER.

At another time also, when the blessed man was sojourning for some days in the province of the Picts, he was obliged to cross the river Nesa [the Ness]; and when he had come to the bank, he sees some of the inhabitants burying an unfortunate fellow whom, as those who were burying him related, a little while before some aquatic monster

seized and savagely bit while he was swimming, and whose hapless body some men, coming up though too late in a boat, rescued by means of hooks which they threw out. The blessed man, however, hearing these things, orders one of his companions to swim out and bring him from over the water a coble that was beached on the other bank. And hearing and obeying the command of the holy and illustrious man, Lugne Mocumin, without delay takes off his clothes, except his tunic, and casts himself into the water. But the monster, which was lying in the river bed, and whose appetite was rather whetted for more prey than sated with what it already had, perceiving the surface of the water disturbed by the swimmer, suddenly comes up and moves towards the man as he swam in mid stream, and with a great roar rushes on him with open mouth, while all who were there, barbarians as well as Brethren, were greatly terror-struck. The blessed man seeing it, after making the Salutary Sign of the Cross in the empty air with his holy hand upraised, and invoking the Name of God, commanded the ferocious monster, saying: "Go thou no further, nor touch the man; go back at once." Then, on hearing this word of the Saint, the monster was terrified, and fled away again more quickly than if it had been dragged off by ropes, though it had approached Lugne as he swam so closely that between man and monster there was no more than the length of one punt pole. Then the Brethren greatly marvelling, seeing the monster had gone

back, and that their comrade Lugne had returned to them in the boat, untouched and unharmed, glorified God in the blessed man. And even the barbarous heathens who were there present, constrained by the greatness of the miracle which they themselves had seen, magnified the God of the Christians.

## NOTES

*Aquatic monster*

“*Aquatilis bestia.*” “The belief”, says Dr. Reeves, “that certain rivers and lakes were haunted by serpents of a demoniacal and terrible character was current among the Irish at a very remote period, and still prevails in many parts of Ireland.” It is recorded by Colgan (“*Acta Sanctorum*”) that St. Molua and St. Colman of Dromore, like St. Columba in the present instance, saved people from monsters which infested lakes. Mr. W. R. Le Fanu, in “*Seventy Years of Irish Life*”, says: “The dreadful beast, the wurrum—half fish, half dragon—still survives in many a mountain lake—seldom seen, indeed, but often heard. Near our fishing quarters in Kerry there are two such lakes, one the beautiful little lake at the head of the Blackwater River called Lough Brin, from Brin, or Bran as he is now called, the direful wurrum which inhabits it. The man who minds the boat there speaks with awe of Bran; he tells me he has never seen him, and hopes he never may, but has often heard him roaring on a stormy night. On being questioned as to what the noise was like, he said it was ‘like the roaring of a young bull.’ . . . Some miles further on, between Lough Brin and Glencar, there is another lake, from which a boy, while bathing, was driven and chased by the dreadful wurrum, which dwells in it. It bit him on the back, and hunted him all the way home, where he arrived naked and bleeding.”

*The river Nesa*

The Ness, between Loch Ness and the Moray Firth. Inverness lies at its estuary.

*Boat*

Alnus, caupallus, and navicula are the words used here; alnus for the boat with which the body of the man was rescued, and caupallus for that which was fetched across by the faithful Lugne. Alnus is a classical word for a boat of alderwood, and caupallus, afterwards also called navicula, is used for the coble, or small flat-bottomed boat or punt.

## XXVIII

CONCERNING THE LAND OF THIS ISLAND (IONA)  
 BLESSED BY THE SAINT, SO THAT HENCE-  
 FORTH THE POISON OF VIPERS MAY HARM  
 NO ONE IN IT.

On a day of that same summer season in which he passed away to the Lord, the Saint goes in a waggon, to visit the Brethren who were engaged in manual labour in the western plain of the isle of Iona. After speaking consoling words to them, the Saint, standing upon higher ground, thus prophesies, saying: "From this day, my children, I know that never will you be able to see my face again in the fields of this plain." And seeing them greatly saddened at hearing this saying, endeavouring to console them as much as he could, he raises both his holy hands, and blessing the whole of this our island, says: "From this present moment the poison of no vipers shall in any way have power to harm either men or cattle within the borders of this island, so long as the inhabitants who dwell here shall observe the commands of Christ."

## NOTES

*The western plain*

Now called the Machar.

*On higher ground*

Probably on one of the "fairy hills." One of them is the Colliculus Angelorum, of chapter xliv. in this Book and of III. xvi.

*The poison of no vipers*

No snakes or vipers have ever been seen in Iona, though they are quite common on the opposite coast. The driving of demons, serpents and toads out of Ireland by St. Patrick is mentioned in the life of that Saint by Jocelin of Furness, written in the twelfth century.

## XXIX

ABOUT A DIRK BLESSED BY THE SAINT WITH  
THE SIGN OF THE LORD'S CROSS.

Another time, a certain Brother named Molua, a descendant of Briun, comes to the Saint, who was writing at the time, and says to him: "I pray thee bless this steel which I have in my hand." And he, stretching forth a little his holy hand with the pen in it, blessed it, making the sign with his face turned the while to the book out of which he was writing. And as the above-mentioned Brother was going away with the steel that had been blessed, the Saint asks, saying: "What steel is it that I have blessed for the Brother?" Diormit, his faithful attendant, says: "A dirk hast thou blessed for slaughtering bulls or oxen." And he, again replying, says: "I trust in my Lord that the



steel which I have blessed will harm neither man nor beast." And this word of the Saint was very strongly confirmed in the same hour; for the same Brother, going outside the enclosure of the monastery with the intention of slaughtering an ox, made three determined efforts and pressed with all his might, and yet could not even pierce its skin. And when the monks witnessed this, they melted the metal of that dirk by heat of fire, and spread the molten metal over all the cutlery of the monastery; nor afterwards could it wound any flesh, the effect of that blessing of the Saint remaining upon it.

## NOTES

*Molua*

The simple form of this Brother's name was Lua. The prefix *mo* is the particle of affection, "my". Colgan, in the "Acta Sanctorum", thinks that this is the Molua whose Day is June 4th in the Calendar, "Molua, son of Sinill, of the race of Briuin."

*Enclosure of the monastery*

"Vallum": the rath or cashel (wall).

*They spread the molten metal*

Dr. Fowler thinks that if the knife blade could be melted so that others could be coated with the metal it must have been of bronze, though called "ferrum" in the sense of blade, and that they would hardly be able to liquefy iron, though they might liquefy bronze as was done for the coating of sheet-iron bells. It seems probable, however, that the knowledge and skill of the Irish metal workers of Columba's time was equal to the fusion of iron. No reference to tempering processes is here intended by the use of the word *steel*.

## XXX

## OF DIORMIT'S CURE FROM SICKNESS.

At another time, Diormit, the Saint's faithful attendant, was sick even unto death, and the Saint came to visit him when he was at the last extremity, and, standing at the sick man's bed and praying for him, and invoking the Name of Christ, he said: "Be kind to me, I pray thee, O my Lord, and take not the soul of my faithful attendant from its dwelling in the flesh while I yet survive." And this said, he was silent for a short time. Then, next, with his sacred lips he utters this saying: "This my servant will not only not die now this time, but will also live for many years after my own death." And this prayer of his was heard, for Diormit, immediately after the acceptable prayer of the Saint, recovered his full health, and also lived on for many years after the Saint's passing away to the Lord.

## XXXI

OF THE HEALING OF FINTAN, SON OF AEDH,  
WHEN AT THE POINT OF DEATH.

Again, at another time, when the Saint was making a journey beyond the Dorsal Ridge of Britain [Drum Alban, the Grampians], a certain youth named Fintan, one of his companions, seized by sudden illness, was brought to the last extremity; and his sorrowing comrades beseech the

Saint to pray for him. And he at once took compassion on them, and spread forth his holy hands to heaven with earnest prayer, and blessing the sick man, says: "This youth for whom you intercede will enjoy a long life, and after the death of all of us who are here present, will survive and die in a good old age." This prophecy of the blessed man was completely fulfilled in all particulars, for the same youth afterwards was founder of that monastery which is called Kailli-au-inde, and ended this present life in a good old age.

## NOTE

*Fintan . . . afterwards founder of Kailli-au-inde*

There are twenty-one Fintans in the Irish Calendar, and this one does not seem to be among them. Dr. Reeves thinks that, having joined the fraternity of Iona early in life, his history belongs to the North British Church. His monastery of Kailli-au-inde has not been identified. Its situation must probably be sought in Scotland, perhaps at Bendothy, in Perthshire, where, at a place called Cally, was a burial ground and a chapel named from St. Fink.

## XXXII

CONCERNING A BOY WHOM THE VENERABLE  
MAN RAISED FROM THE DEAD IN THE  
NAME OF THE LORD CHRIST.

At that time, when Saint Columba was sojourning for some days in the province of the Picts, a certain countryman, with all his household, hearing the word of life through an interpreter when the holy man preached, believed, and, believing, was baptized, the

husband, with his wife and children and servants. And after some little interval of a few days one of the sons of the father of the family was attacked by severe illness, and brought even to the confines of life and death. And when the Magi [Druids] saw him dying, they began to rail at the parents with great abuse, and to exalt their own gods as the stronger, but to disparage the God of the Christians as weaker. And when all these things were reported to the blessed man, he is stirred up with zeal for God and proceeds with his companions to the house of his friend the countryman, where the parents were celebrating the sad obsequies of their child, by this time dead. And the Saint, seeing them greatly saddened, encouraging them, urges them in consoling words by no means to distrust the Divine omnipotence. And he then makes inquiry, saying: "In what room lies the body of the dead boy?" The bereaved father then leads the Saint under his roof of mourning, and he, leaving the whole crowd outside, immediately enters the house of woe alone; where forthwith, on bended knees, his face bathed with copious tears, he prays to Christ the Lord, and rising from his knees turns his eyes to the dead one, saying: "In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, arise and stand upon thy feet." At this glorious word of the Saint the soul returned to the body, and the dead boy revived and opened his eyes, and the apostolic man, holding his hand, raised him up, and, steadying him on his feet, led him with him out of the house and restored him alive to his parents.

Then the shouting of the people arises on high ; weeping is turned into rejoicing ; the God of the Christians is glorified.

Let our Columba, then, share this miracle of might in common with Elias and Eliseus, the prophets, and have equal honour with the apostles Peter and Paul and John in the raising up of the dead. And among both companies, that is of prophets and apostles, may the prophetic and apostolic man have in the Heavenly Country an honourable and eternal throne with Christ, who reigneth with the Father, in the Unity of the Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.

#### NOTE

##### *Through an interpreter*

The mission of St. Columba seems to have been undertaken before he had learned the Pictish language sufficiently well to be able to preach in it. And it was so also in the case of Artbranan, narrated in chapter xxxiii. of the First Book. The following stanza from the "Amhra of Columb-kille" tells of his labours among the nations of Britain :

The people of Alba to the Ictian Sea, [the English Channel]  
The Gaedhill, Cruithneans, Saxons, Saxo-Brits,  
Best of men was the man who went to them ;  
Thirty years did he preach to them.

## XXXIII

CONCERNING BROICHAN, THE DRUID, HIS SICKNESS ON ACCOUNT OF THE DETENTION OF A MAIDSERVANT AND HIS CURE UPON HER LIBERATION.

At the same time the venerable man requested of Broichan, the Druid, the setting free, for the sake of humanity, of a certain Irish bondmaid: and when with very hard and doltish obstinacy he retained her, the Saint, addressing him, thus speaks: "Know, Broichan, know if thou refuse to deliver to me this captive stranger before I return from this province, thou wilt quickly die."

And saying this in the presence of Brude, the king, and going forth from the royal dwelling, he comes to the river Ness, from which river taking a white pebble, he says to his companions: "Note well this white stone, by which the Lord will effect many cures among this heathen people." And having thus said, he next added: "Now is Broichan severely smitten; for an Angel sent from heaven, has struck him severely and shattered into many fragments the glass in his hand from which he was drinking, and has left him gasping, feeble, sobbing and nearly dead. Let us await a little while in this place the two messengers of the king sent to us, that we may quickly come to the help of the dying Broichan. Now Broichan, terribly punished, is ready to set the little maid free."

Whilst the Saint was yet speaking these words,

behold, as he had foretold, two horsemen sent by the king arrive and relate all things which have happened to Broichan in the king's fortress, according to the Saint's prophecy, both as to the breaking of the cup and the punishment of the Druid and his readiness to set free the slave, and they added this, saying: "The king and his household have sent us to thee that thou mayest come to the assistance of Broichan, his foster-father, who is at the point of death." When these words of the messengers were heard, the Saint sends two of the band of his companions to the king with the stone blessed by him, saying: "If first Broichan will promise to set free the girl, then let this little stone be dipped in water and so let him drink of it, and he shall at once recover health; but if he refuses and opposes the freeing of the slave girl, he will immediately die."

The two who were sent, obeying the Saint's word, come to the royal hall and tell to the king the words of the venerable man. And when they were made known to the king, and to Broichan his foster-father, they greatly feared; and in the same hour the girl is set free and delivered to the messengers of the holy man; the pebble is dipped in water, and in a wonderful manner, contrary to its nature, the stone floats on the water like an apple or a nut; nor could the object blessed by the holy man be sunk. And Broichan, drinking from this floating stone, returned at once from imminent death and recovered perfect health of body. This remarkable stone, afterwards pre-

served among the king's treasures, swimming in the same way in the water in which it was dipped, effected, through God's mercy, many cures of sicknesses among the people.

Wonderful to relate, this same stone, when required by these sick persons, when the end of their life was at hand, could never be found. Thus also it was sought for on the day of the death of King Brude, and it was not to be found in the same place where it had before been put away.

## NOTES

*Broichan, the Druid*

The name is British.

*The royal dwelling*

King Brude's fortified seat was at the north-east end of Loch Ness, at or near the modern Inverness, probably on the ridge called Torvean.

*The day of the death of King Brude*

King Brude died in 583.

## XXXIV

CONCERNING THE BLESSED MAN'S OPPOSITION  
TO BROICHAN, THE DRUID, AND THE CON-  
TRARIETY OF THE WIND.

After the above-mentioned events, Broichan, speaking one day to the holy man, says: "Tell me, Columba, at what time dost thou propose to sail forth?" "On the third day," says the Saint, "God willing and life remaining, we propose to



begin our voyage." "Thou wilt not be able to do so," says Broichan in reply, "for I can make the wind contrary for thee, and bring dark clouds upon thee." The Saint says: "The omnipotence of God rules over all things, in whose name all our movements, He Himself governing them, are directed." What more need be said? On the same day as he had purposed in his heart the Saint came to the long lake of the river Ness, a great crowd following. But the Druids then began to rejoice when they saw a great darkness coming over, and a contrary wind with a tempest. Nor should it be wondered at that these things can be done by the art of demons, God permitting it, so that even winds and waters are roused to fury.

For it was thus that legions of devils once met the holy bishop Germanus in mid-ocean, what time he was sailing from the Gallican Gulf [the British Channel] to Britain in the cause of man's salvation, and stirred up dangerous storms and spread darkness over the sky and obscured daylight. All which storms, however, were stilled at the prayer of St. Germanus, and, quicker than said, ceased, and the darkness was swept away.

Our Columba, therefore, seeing the furious elements stirred up against him, calls upon Christ the Lord, and entering the boat while the sailors are hesitating, he, with all the more confidence, orders the sail to be rigged against the wind. Which being done, the whole crowd looking on meanwhile, the boat is borne along against the contrary winds with amazing velocity. And after no great

interval, the adverse winds veer round to the advantage of the voyage amid the astonishment of all. And thus, throughout that whole day, the blessed man's boat was driven along by gentle favouring breezes, and reached the desired haven. Let the reader, therefore, consider how great and saintly was that venerable man through whom Almighty God manifested His glorious Name by such miraculous powers as have just been described in the presence of a heathen people.

## NOTES

*The holy bishop Germanus sailing from the Gallican Gulf*

St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, visited Britain in 429 and 448. The incident of the storm here mentioned is given in the "Life of St. Germanus" by Constantius, a priest of Lyons contemporary with the Saint. The "Gallican Gulf" is the British Channel.

*The desired haven*

The southern end of Loch Ness, where now stands St. Benedict's Abbey, Fort Augustus.

## XXXV

CONCERNING THE SPONTANEOUS AND SUDDEN  
OPENING OF THE GATE OF THE ROYAL  
FORTRESS.

At another time, that is at the time when the Saint was weary from his first journey to King Brude, it so happened that that king, elated by royal pride in his fortress, acting haughtily, did not open the gates at the blessed man's first arrival.

And when the man of God knew this, he came with his companions to the wickets of the portals, and first traced on them the Sign of the Lord's Cross and then knocking, he lays his hand against the doors, and immediately the bolts are violently shot back, the doors open in all haste of their own accord, and being thus opened the Saint thereupon enters with his companions. Upon this being known the king with his council is greatly affrighted, and issues forth from his house to meet the blessed man with all reverence; and addresses him gently with conciliatory words. And from that day forth this ruler honoured the holy and venerable man with very great honour all the remaining days of his life ; as was proper.

## NOTE

*Pride in his fortress*

As stated in the note to chapter xxxiii., this was probably the fortified ridge of Torvean, near Inverness. Three ancient sites close to Inverness have been proposed as the site of Brude's fortified seat. Dr. Reeves is in favour of the vitrified hill fort of Craig Phadrack, now in the midst of a plantation two miles west of Inverness and the river Ness. Dr. Skene (in "Celtic Scotland," ed. 1887) thinks that it was unlikely that in the sixth century the royal palace should have been in a vitrified fort on the top of a rocky hill nearly 500 feet high, and that it is certainly inconsistent with the narrative that St. Columba should have had to ascend such an eminence to reach it. "There is, however," continues Dr. Skene, "about a mile south-west of Inverness (and on the west bank of the river), a gravelly ridge called Torvean. Part of this ridge is encircled with ditches and ramparts, as if it had formed an ancient hill fort, and at its base (along which the Caledonian Canal has been carried) a

massive silver chain, weighing 104 ozs. and 18 inches long, was discovered in the year 1808." This high gravelly ridge is called Tor-a'-Bhean in the "New Statistical Account of Scotland, 1845," from its containing the cairn, or sepulchre according to some, of an early monk called Bean, or Benjamin, but more likely of Donald Bane, a Hebridean chief, who, in 1187, encountered a party from the castle of Inverness, headed by Duncan Mackintosh, son of the governor, and who perished with Donald Bane in the fight. The silver chain above referred to—now in the possession of the Antiquarian Society of Edinburgh—is thought to have been some ornament or ensign of Donald Bane. The third site lies in the town of Inverness on the eminence called the "Crown," where tradition places its oldest castle. This is on the eastern side of the Ness, and Dr. Skene, referring to it, says that the only time that Adamnan notices Columba going by land instead of sailing down Loch Ness, he went on the north side of the lake, and then he appears to have crossed the river.

## XXXVI

CONCERNING A SIMILAR UNLOCKING OF THE  
CHURCH OF THE FIELD OF TWO RIVERS.

Again at another time, the blessed man, while staying for some days in Ireland, set out to visit the Brethren who were living in the monastery of the Field of Two Rivers at their own request. But by some chance it happened that, when he arrived at the church, the keys of the Oratory were not to be found. But when the Saint heard the others inquiring among themselves about the missing keys and the locked doors, he himself, approaching the door, says: "The Lord is able to

open His House for His servants, even without keys." At this saying the bolts were suddenly and violently shot back, the gate opening of itself, and the Saint, to the wonder of all, walks into the church before them all, and, being hospitably received by the Brethren, is honoured and venerated by all.

## NOTE

*The Church of the Field of the Two Rivers*

"Ecclesia Duorum Agri-Rivorum." Tir-da-glas, now Terryglass, in Co. Tipperary. The monastery there was founded by Colummac Crimthan, a contemporary and fellow student of St. Columba at St. Finnian's monastery of Clonard.

## XXXVII

CONCERNING A CERTAIN COMMON BEGGAR FOR WHOM THE SAINT MADE A PIKE FOR KILLING WILD ANIMALS, AND BLESSED IT.

At another time there came to the Saint a certain very poor peasant who lived in that district which borders on the shores of the Aporic Lake [Lochaber]. The blessed man, taking pity on this unhappy beggar man, who had not wherewithal to feed his wife and little ones, gave him such alms as he could, and says: "My poor fellow, take a stake from the wood hard by, and bring it to me quickly." The wretched man, obeying, brought the stake according to the Saint's command, and the Saint took and sharpened it into a pike, and pointing it

with his own hand, he blessed it, and gave it to that poor man, saying : "Keep carefully this pike, which, I believe, will be incapable of injuring either man or any cattle, except wild animals and also fishes ; and so long as thou hast this stake there will never be wanting in thy house an abundant supply of deer's flesh."

And hearing this the unhappy beggar, greatly rejoicing, returns home and fixes the pike in a secluded place which the wild animals frequented ; and when the next night was passed, he goes in the early morning desirous of looking at his pike, and on it he finds transfixed a stag of wondrous size impaled upon it. What more need be said? No day could pass, as has been told us by tradition, in which he did not find either stag or doe, or some beast, fallen upon the pike he had set. And his whole house being thus filled with game, he sold to his neighbours what was over, for which he had no room in his house. But the envy of the devil found out even this poor man through his wife, as was the case with Adam, for she, like a silly and not a wise woman, spoke thus to her husband : "Take the pike out of the ground, for if men, or even cattle, should perish by it, thou thyself and I with our children shall either be slain or led away captive." To this the husband says : "It will not be so, for the holy man told me when he blessed the stake that it would never injure men or even cattle." After these words the beggar, yielding to his wife, goes and takes the pike out of the ground, and, madman as he was, placed it by the wall

inside the house. And soon after, his house dog falling on it, died. And it being dead, the wife again says : "One of my children will fall upon the stake and perish." And on hearing this saying of hers, the husband removes the pike from the wall and carries it back to the wood, and fixes it among the thicker bushes, where, as he thought, it could not be in the way of any animal. But returning next day he found that a goat had fallen upon it and perished. Removing it from there also, he fixed it in the river, which may be called in Latin *Nigra Dea*, hiding it near the bank under water ; and revisiting it the next day he found on it a salmon of wondrous size, pierced and held by it ; and when he lifted it from the river, he was scarcely able by himself to carry it to his house. And carrying the pike with him at the same time back from the water, he fixed it outside on the top of the roof. And a crow then alighting on it was killed by the impact. And upon this the unhappy man, misled by the advice of his foolish wife, removes the pike from the roof, and, taking an axe, chopped it into many pieces and threw them into the fire. And afterwards, having forfeited this substantial relief of his poverty, he again began to beg, as he deserved. For this relief from the cares of poverty depended on the oft-mentioned pike, endowed with the holy man's blessing, which, as long as he kept it, served the purpose of traps and nets, and all kinds of tackle for the chase, and for fishing. And the loss of it the wretched peasant, who for the time being had been rich, could only deplore, when

too late, along with the whole of his little household, all the rest of the days of their life.

## NOTE

*The river . . . Nigra Dea*

Irish, "Dubh bandea." Not identified; but Bandea occurs in the Book of Armagh as the name of a river in Ireland.

## XXXVIII

CONCERNING THE MILK-SKIN WHICH THE EBB-TIDE CARRIED AWAY AND THE FLOOD-TIDE DEPOSITED AGAIN IN ITS FORMER PLACE.

At another time the blessed man's messenger, Lugaid by name, surnamed Lathir, intending under orders to set sail for Ireland, finding among the nautical outfit of the Saint's boat a milk-skin which he was searching for, put it to soak in the sea, heaping upon it stones—and not small ones; and coming to the Saint, he told him what he had done with the skin. And he, smiling, says: "The skin which, as thou sayest, thou didst place under the water, it will not accompany thee this time to Ireland, I think." "Why?" says he. "Shall I not be able to have it with me in the ship?" "Another day", says the Saint, "thou shalt know what the event will prove." Early on the following day, therefore, Lugaid goes to take the skin out of the sea. The ebb-tide, however, had carried it away in the night. And not finding it he returned, sad, to the Saint, and kneeling on the ground confessed



his carelessness. And the Saint, consoling him, says : “Do not grieve, brother, for perishable things ; the skin which the ebb-tide has carried away the flood-tide will carry back to its place after thy departure.” On the same day after the departure of Lugaid from Iona, after the ninth hour [3 p.m.], the Saint, addressing those standing around, thus says : “Now let one of you go to the sea ; the skin for which Lugaid lamented, and which the ebb-tide carried away, the flood-tide has now brought back and replaced in the spot whence it was taken.”

And hearing the word of the Saint, a certain active youth ran down to the seashore, and, having found the skin as the Saint had predicted, carried it quickly back, running at full speed, and greatly rejoicing, laid it down before the Saint, amid the admiration of all who were there. In these two narratives above written, although they deal with small matters, namely, a stake and a milk-skin, there are seen to go hand-in-hand, as has often been said, the gift of prophecy and the power of miracles.

Now let us proceed to other things.

#### NOTES

*Lugaid, surnamed Lathir*

i.e. the brave.

*Milk-skin*

“Uter lactarium” : either a whole skin like a wine skin, or a leather bottle, “Pait,” in Irish, such as is mentioned in the ancient tale of the “Navigation of Maelduin’s Boat.”

## XXXIX

THE PROPHECY OF THE SAINT CONCERNING  
LIBRAN "OF THE RUSH FIELD."

At another time, when the holy man was sojourning in Iona, a certain man of the people, who had lately assumed the clerical habit, sailing over from Ireland, came to the island monastery of the blessed man. And one day, when the Saint found him sitting alone in the guest-house, after being first questioned by the Saint as to his country, his family, and the cause of his journey, he stated that he was born in the county of the men of Connaught, and had wearied himself by a long journey in pilgrimage to atone for his sins. And when the Saint, to test the nature of his penitence, set before his eyes the hard and laborious regulations of the monastery, he thereupon answering the Saint, says: "I am ready to do all things, whatever thou wishest to command me, however hard, however humiliating." What more need be said? In the same hour he confessed all his sins, and promised, kneeling on the ground, to fulfil the laws of penance. And the Saint says to him: "Rise up, and be seated." Then, when he was seated, he thus addressed him: "Seven years' penance must thou do in the Ethican land [Tiree]. I and thou, by God's grace, are to live until thou completest the number of seven years."

Comforted by these words of the Saint, and giving thanks to God, he says to the Saint: "What

ought I to do as to a certain false oath of mine? For while in my native land I slew a certain poor fellow, after whose slaying I was detained in chains as guilty. But a certain man of my kindred, of the same parentage, very wealthy, coming forward opportunely, freed me from the chains which bound me and rescued me when I was under sentence of death. And to him after my release I promised with rigorous oath that I would serve him all the days of my life. But after a few days passed in servitude, disdainng to serve man and wishing rather to obey God, I became a deserter from that earthly lord, and broke my oath and fled, and I have come to thee, the Lord prospering my journey." To these words the Saint, seeing the man greatly distressed about such things, first prophesying as before, addresses him saying: "After the completion of seven years, as has been told thee, thou shalt come hither to me during Lent, so that thou mayest approach the altar at the Paschal festival and receive the Eucharist."

Why linger with words? The penitent pilgrim obeys in all things the holy man's commands. And having been sent in those days to the monastery of the Plain of Lunge (in Tیره), there having fully completed his seven years' penance, he returns to the Saint according to his former prophetic command, in the days of Lent. And after the observance of the Paschal solemnity was over, in which, as bidden, he approached the altar, he came to the Saint asking him about his above-mentioned oath. And to his question the Saint,

prophesying, replies : "Thy earthly lord, of whom thou once didst speak to me, still lives, and thy father, and mother, and brethren still live. Now, therefore, thou shouldest prepare thyself for a voyage." And, so speaking, he offered him a sword ornamented with carved tusks of beasts, saying : "Accept this gift to take with thee, which thou wilt offer to thy master for thy ransom. But yet he will by no means accept it, for he has a well-disposed wife, and deferring to her wholesome advice he will grant thee thy liberty on the same day, free, without price, loosing from thy loins, according to custom, the bond man's girdle. But though thus relieved from this anxiety, thou shalt not escape another care springing up at thy side ; for thy brethren will press thee on every side to furnish the support so long due to thy father, and neglected. But thou, obeying their wish without any hesitation, receive thy old father and dutifully cherish him. And this burden, though it may seem heavy to thee, thou must not grieve over, because thou shalt soon put it off ; for on the very day thou shalt begin to wait on thy father, on that day week at the end of the same week, he will die and thou wilt bury him. But, after thy father's burial, again will thy brethren angrily compel thee to render also the offices of piety due to thy mother. From which obligation thy younger brother will free thee, being ready in thy stead to render dutifully for thee to thy mother every work of filial piety which thou dost owe."

After these words the above-mentioned Brother,

Libran by name, having accepted the gift, set out, enriched with the Saint's blessing, and, coming to his native country, he found all things turn out true according to the Saint's prophecy. For as soon as he showed and offered the price of his freedom to his master, the wife, opposing his wish to accept it, says: "Why should we accept this ransom sent by holy Columba? We are not worthy of this. Let him have gratis the freedom of this dutiful servant. The blessing of the holy man will more profit us than this ransom which is offered." And so the husband, hearing this wholesome counsel of his wife, at once set the serf free without ransom. And after that, according to the Saint's prophecy, being forced by his brothers to wait upon his father, he buried him after his death on the seventh day. And, his father buried, he is compelled to render a son's duty to his mother. But the younger brother coming forward, as the Saint had foretold, takes his place, and he is released. And he—the younger brother—thus said to his brothers: "It by no means behoves us to keep our brother at home, he who for seven years has worked out the salvation of his soul with St. Columba in Britain."

After which, freed from all his trouble and bidding farewell to his mother and brethren, he returned, a free man, to the place which is called in Irish, Daire Calgaich (Derry). And finding there a ship under sail setting out from the harbour, calling out from the shore he begs that the sailors would take him with them to

sail into Britain. But they refused to receive him because they did not belong to the monks of St. Columba. Then, next, speaking to that venerable man, far distant though he was, but present in spirit, as the event soon proved: "Doth it please thee, holy Columba," he says, "that these sailors who do not receive me, thy companion, shall sail forth with full sails and favouring winds?" At this word the wind, which was favourable for them before, quicker than words, veered round against them. Meanwhile, seeing the same man running over against them along the bank of the river, hastily taking counsel among themselves, the sailors calling out from the ship, say to him: "Perhaps the wind has suddenly changed against us, because we refused to take thee. But if even now we were to invite thee aboard the ship with us couldst thou now change the wind into a favourable one?" Hearing this, the wayfarer said to them: "St. Columba, to whom I am going, and whom I have served until now for seven years, can obtain a fair wind for you from his Lord by the power of his prayers if you will take me." And hearing this, they bring the ship near the shore and invite him into it with them. And he, straightway boarding the ship, says: "In the name of the Almighty, Whom St. Columba blamelessly serves, tighten the ropes and hoist your sail." Which being done, the contrary breezes are at once turned into favourable ones, and, under full press of sail, a prosperous voyage to Britain ensued.

And Libran, after they had come to British shores, leaving that ship and blessing the sailors, came to St. Columba, where he was staying in Iona. And the blessed man received him joyfully, and told him in detail, without any other informant, all things that had occurred during the journey, both as to his master and the wholesome advice of his wife, and how he was liberated at her pleading; as to his brothers also; the death of his father and his burial at the end of the week; as to his mother and the opportune succour from his younger brother; about those things which happened when he was returning; the contrary wind and the favourable one; the words of the sailors who at first refused to take him; the promise of the favourable breeze, and the favourable change of wind when he was taken into the ship. What more need be said? All the things which the Saint prophesied should be fulfilled he related as they had happened. After these words the traveller laid down the price of his ransom, which he had received from the Saint. And to him in the same hour the Saint assigned a name, saying: "Thou shalt be called Libran, because thou art free (*liber*).” And this same Libran in those days fervently took the monastic vow.

And when he was being sent back by the holy man to the monastery in which he previously as a penitent served the Lord for seven years, he got from him, when he bid him farewell, these prophetic words concerning himself: "Thou shalt live a long life, and shalt end this present life in a good old

age. Yet, however, thou shalt rise again, not in Britain, but in Ireland." Hearing which saying he wept bitterly on bended knees. And the Saint, seeing him very sorrowful, began to console him, saying: "Rise up, and be not sorrowful. Thou shalt die in one of my own monasteries; and with my chosen monks shall thy part be in the Kingdom; and with them shalt thou awake from the sleep of death to the resurrection of life." And, receiving from the Saint no small consolation, he greatly rejoiced, and, enriched with the Saint's blessing, went his way in peace. And this true prophecy of the Saint as to this man was afterwards fulfilled. For when he had obediently served the Lord in the monastery of the Plain of Lunge [in Tíree] for the round of many years after the passing of St. Columba from the world, this monk, then very old, was sent to Ireland on some monastic business, and as soon as he alighted from the ship, going through the Plain of Breg [in Meath], he came to the monastery of the Oak Plain [Dúrraw]; and there, being received into the guest-house as a guest, he contracted some illness, and on the seventh day of his sickness he departed in peace to the Lord, and was buried among the chosen monks of St. Columba, there, according to his prophecy, to rise again to eternal life.

Let it suffice to have written these true prophecies of St. Columba concerning Libran "of the Rush Field." Which same Libran was called "of the Rush Field" because for many years he had worked in a rushfield, gathering rushes.



## NOTES

*Set me free from the chains*

“Absolvit” by paying the fine, eric or blod-wite, to the nearest of kin of the slain man.

*Running along the bank of the river*

The Feabhal, or Foyle, on which Derry stands.

*Sword ornamented with carved tusks of beasts*

Solinus, in “Polyhistor” xxiii., speaking of the Irish and their love for shining weapons, says: “They *decorate the handles of their swords with the teeth of marine animals*, for they shine like ivory, and the warriors make their chief boast in the brilliance of their weapons.” Solinus wrote in the first part of the third century: his friend Adventus, to whom he dedicated his book, was consul in A.D. 218.

*Thou shalt die in one of my own monasteries*

Durrow, which is the monastery here referred to, and Iona were the two parent houses of St. Columba’s Order. He also founded in Ireland, Derry, Kells, Kilmore-dithreabh, Swords, Rechra and Drumcliff. All these were included in the *familia Columbæ-kille*, and owned St. Columba as their common head.

## XL

CONCERNING A CERTAIN WOMAN WHO AS A DAUGHTER OF EVE SUFFERED GREAT AND VERY HARD THROES OF CHILDBIRTH.

One day, the Saint then dwelling in Iona, rises from his reading, and smiling, says: “Now I must hasten to the Oratory, that I may pray to the Lord for a certain poor woman who is now in Ireland, and is crying out, calling on the name of this

Columba, in the throes of great pains in a most difficult childbirth; and therefore she is hoping that release from her sufferings will be given her, through me, by the Lord, because she is akin to me, her father being sprung from my mother's family." Thus speaking, and moved by pity for that poor woman, the Saint runs to the church, and on bended knees earnestly prays for her to Christ, Himself born of mankind. And after his prayer, going forth from the Oratory, he speaks to the Brethren whom he met, saying: "Now is the Lord Jesus, the Son of a woman, merciful, opportunely helping her who is afflicted. He has delivered her from her anguish, and she has safely brought forth a child; and she will not die this time." In the same hour, as the Saint prophesied, the poor woman calling on his name was delivered, and recovered her health. So was it afterwards stated by certain persons who came over from Ireland and from the same district where the woman lived.

## NOTES

*She is akin to me*

St. Columba's mother was Eithne, descended from Cathaer Mor, King of Leinster and afterwards of Ireland, in the early part of the second century.

*The same district where the woman lived*

This would probably be North Leinster, that having been the territory assigned to Daire Barrach, the ancestor of Eithne, St. Columba's mother.

## XLI

CONCERNING A CERTAIN LUGNE, A PILOT, WHO WAS SURNAMED TUDIDA, WHOM, AS HE WAS DEFORMED, HIS WIFE HATED, AND WHO LIVED IN THE RECHREAN ISLAND [RATHLIN, OR LAMBAY]

At another time, when the holy man was a guest in the Rechrean island, a certain peasant came to him and complained of his wife, who, as he said, had a dislike to him, and would in no wise allow him to approach her. On hearing this, the Saint, calling the wife to him, began so far as he could to reprove her on that account, saying: "Why, woman, dost thou try to drive from thee thine own flesh, when the Lord says: 'And they shall be two in one flesh'; therefore the flesh of thy husband is thy flesh." And she, answering, says: "All things whatsoever thou shalt command, however hard they may be, I am ready to do, one thing excepted, that thou do in no wise oblige me to cohabit with Lugne. I do not refuse to do all the housework, or, if thou do so bid me, even to cross the sea and remain in some monastery of maidens." The Saint then says: "That which thou sayest cannot rightly be done, for thou art bound by the law of thy husband as long as the man lives. For those whom God hath lawfully joined, it is a sin for them to separate." And having said this, he next adds: "This day let us three, namely, I, and the husband, with the wife, pray to the Lord fasting." She then

says : " I know it will not be impossible for thee to obtain by prayer from God those things which seem difficult or even impossible."

What more need be said? The wife that same day agrees to fast with the Saint, and likewise the husband : the following night, the Saint goes sleepless and prays for them, and on the next day the Saint, in the husband's presence, thus addresses the wife : " O woman, art thou prepared to-day, as thou didst say yesterday, to go away to a monastery of women?" " Now I know," she says, " that thy prayer to God for me is heard, for him whom I hated yesterday, I love to-day, for my heart this night past—how I know not—has been changed in me from hate to love." Why need we linger? From that day to the day of her death the soul of that wife was indissolubly cemented in love to her husband.

## XLII

THE PROPHECY OF THE BLESSED MAN REGARDING THE VOYAGE OF CORMAC, DESCENDANT OF LETHAN.

At another time Cormac, a soldier of Christ about whom we have briefly recorded some few matters in the first book of this little work [chapter vi.], made again a second attempt to discover a desert (island) in the sea. And after he had sailed from the land over the boundless ocean under full sail, St. Columba, who was staying in those days beyond the Dorsal Ridge of Britain

[the Grampians], commended him to King Brude, in the presence of the under-king of the Orcades [Orkneys], saying: "Some of our people have lately gone forth hoping to find a solitude in the pathless sea, and if perchance after long wanderings they should come to the Orcades islands, do thou earnestly commend them to this under-king, whose hostages are in thy hand, that no misfortune befall them within his territories. This indeed the Saint thus said, because he foreknew in spirit that after some months the same Cormac was destined to arrive at the Orcades. Which afterwards so happened, and on account of the holy man's above-mentioned recommendation, he was delivered from impending death in the Orcades.

After an interval of some few months, while the Saint was living in Iona, mention of the same Cormac's name unexpectedly arises one day in his presence in the conversation of some people, speaking in this wise: "How Cormac's voyage is progressing—prosperously or not—is as yet unknown." And this remark being heard by the Saint, he speaks thus, saying: "You will see Cormac, of whom you are now talking, arriving here presently, to-day." And after the space of about one hour, wonderful to relate, behold! Cormac arrives unexpectedly, and walks into the Oratory amid the wonder and the thanksgiving of all.

And as we have briefly mentioned the prophecy of the blessed man as to the second voyage of this Cormac, we must now also write some descrip-

tion of his equally prophetic knowledge concerning the third.

When this same Cormac was toiling over the ocean waters for the third time, he began to be in peril well-nigh to death. For when his ship in full sail during fourteen summer days and as many nights, held on a course straight from the land, before a southerly wind, towards the region of the north, his voyage seemed to go beyond the limit of human experience, and return impossible. Whence it happened that after the tenth hour of the same fourteenth day certain awful terrors, almost too great to be borne, arose on every side; for certain loathsome and very dangerous creatures, which up to that time, indeed, had never been seen, came into sight, covering the sea; and with a terrible rush they smote the keel and sides, the stern and prow, so heavily that it seemed as though in the end they would break through the leather sheathing of the boat. And, as those who were there afterwards related, they were about the size of frogs, with very terrible stings, and more like swimming than flying creatures, and they also swarmed over the blades of the oars. And seeing these, among other monsters of which there is no time at present to tell, Cormac and the companions of his voyage, are greatly troubled and terrified, and pray with tears to God, Who is a kind and timely Helper of those in trouble. That same hour our holy Columba, though far away in body, yet was present in spirit in the ship with Cormac. Wherefore at the same moment, the bell is sounded, and calls

the Brethren to the Oratory, and entering the church, speaks, and prophesies in his accustomed manner, to those standing round, saying: "Brothers, pray with all fervour for Cormac, who now, by voyaging too far, has ventured beyond the bounds of human discovery, and now suffers horrible alarms from monsters never before seen and almost indescribable. We ought therefore, in heart, to pity our fellow-members and brethren placed in intolerable peril, and pray to the Lord with them. For behold, now Cormac with his sailors, his face wet with many tears, earnestly prays to Christ; and let us help him by our prayers, that He may have mercy on us, and change into a north wind the south wind that has been blowing now these fourteen days, and that this north wind may bring Cormac's ship out of danger."

And thus saying, with plaintive voice and bended knees before the altar he prays the Omnipotence of God which rules the winds and all things. And after his prayer he rises quickly and, wiping his tears, joyfully gives thanks to God, saying: "Now, Brothers, let us rejoice with our dear ones for whom we pray, for the Lord will now change the south wind into a north wind, which will bring our fellow-members out of their perils and will bring them back again to us." And even as he was speaking, the south wind ceased; and a north wind blew for many days after, and Cormac's ship was brought back to land. And Cormac came to St. Columba, and, God granting it, they beheld

each other face to face, amid the great wonder and no little joy of all.

Let the reader, therefore, weigh well how great and of what holiness this blessed man was who had such prophetic knowledge, and could, by invoking the Name of Christ, command the winds and the sea.

#### NOTES

##### *The Orkney Islands, "Orcades Insulas"*

From the peril which Cormac ran into when reaching the islands, it is probable that the inhabitants, Picts or Scandinavians, were still pagans.

##### *Cormac's voyage to the "region of the north"*

There are several recorded instances of voyages made by the early Irish Christians to the north, to Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and even to the frozen sea. Dicuil, in his tract, "De Mensura Orbis Terræ", A.D. 825, says that particulars relating to Thilé (Thule: Iceland) had been communicated to him by certain clerics who had been there before 795, and that after one day's sail to the north, beyond it they found the sea frozen.

Cormac's boat was of the class called *curach* by the Irish, *corwg* by the British, *coracle* in modern English. The coracle is mentioned by Cæsar, "Bell. Civil." I. liv., Lucan (iv.), Pliny in his "Natural History" VII. lvi., and Solinus, chapter xxxv. The building of a curach is thus described in the Life of St. Brendan, contemporary of Columba. "Sanctus Brendanus et qui cum eo erant, acceptis feramentis, fecerunt naviculam levissimam costatam et columnatam ex vimine, sicut mos est in illis partibus [Mt. Brandon, in Kerry] et cooperuerunt eam coriis bovinis ac rubricatis in cortice roborina, linieruntque foris omnes juncturas navis, et expendia quadraginta dierum et butirum ad pelles preparandas assumpserunt ad cooperimentum navis, et cetera utensilia quæ ad usum vitæ humanæ pertinent. Arborem posuerunt in medio navis fixum, et velum, et cetera quæ ad gubernationem navis pertinent.



*Certain loathsome and very dangerous creatures*

Dr. Fowler tells us in a note to this passage that the Rev. Dr. A. M. Norman suggested to him that these creatures must have been the common stinging jelly-fish, *Cyanæa capillata*: "They are larger than frogs, but their brown colour, and the fact that the rounded bell of a floating cyanæa above the water is not unlike the rounded back of a frog floating still at the surface, might have suggested the comparison. The jelly-fish are often a great impediment to rowing, their long tentacula becoming entangled in the blades of the oars; and fishermen know too well the effects of their stinging filaments when they handle ropes, nets, or oars, or anything that has come in contact with the jelly-fish."

## XLIII

CONCERNING THE VENERABLE MAN'S JOURNEY  
ON A CAR WITHOUT ITS LINCH-PINS.

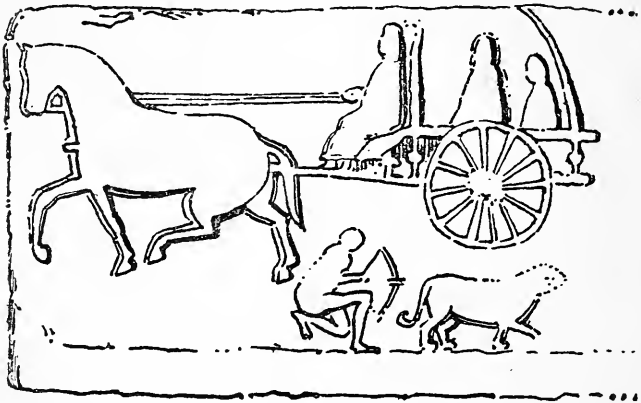
At another time, when the Saint was staying for some days in Ireland, preoccupied by some ecclesiastical business, he mounts a car ready yoked, previously blessed by him, but, through some unaccountable oversight, without the necessary linch-pins being first inserted in the holes at the axle-ends.

Now on this occasion it was Columbanus, son of Eochaid, a holy man, founder of that monastery which in the Irish tongue is called Slamluthir [Slanore], who acted as driver in the same car with St. Columba. And so there was on that day a great strain on it over long stretches of road, without the wheels and the axles falling asunder, although, as has been said above, there were no

linch-pins to hold them together or steady them. But it was by the Divine grace alone thus favouring the venerated man that the car in which he was comfortably seated moved forward without mishap on a straight course.

Thus far may it suffice to have written concerning the miraculous powers which the Divine Omnipotence wrought through the illustrious man while abiding in this life. Now also are to be commemorated some few of those which are proved to have been granted to him by the Lord after his passing away from the body.

## NOTE



SCULPTURED STONE, MEIGLE, PERTHSHIRE

The car here spoken of would no doubt be such a one as is here figured.

## XLIV

HOW RAIN FELL ON THE THIRSTY GROUND AFTER SOME MONTHS OF DROUGHT, THE LORD GRANTING IT FOR THE HONOUR OF THE BLESSED MAN.

Almost fourteen years ago, there was in these barren lands a very great, continuous and severe drought in the spring time, insomuch that that threat of the Lord, applied in the Book of Leviticus (xxvi.) to the sinful people, seemed to be hanging over them, where He says: "I will give you the heaven above as iron, and the earth as brass. Your labour shall be spent in vain; the earth shall not bring forth her seed, nor the trees yield fruit", etc. We, therefore, on reading these words, and greatly dreading an impending calamity, took counsel, and agreed that this should be done: that some of our elders should walk round a newly-ploughed and sown field, with the white tunic of St. Columba, and with books written with his own pen; and that they should lift up in the air and thrice shake out the tunic, the same one in which he was clad at the hour of his departure from the body; and that they should open his books, and read them on the Hill of the Angels, where once on a time the Citizens of the Heavenly Country were seen to descend to hold conversation with the blessed man. And after all these things had been done, according to the counsel taken, wonderful to

say, on that same day the sky, bare of clouds during the past months, March, namely, and April, was with marvellous rapidity overspread with them, suddenly rising up from the sea, and a great rain fell continuously day and night, and the earth, thirsty before, was now thoroughly soaked, produced its shoots in due season, and, the same year, very joyful harvests. And thus the mention of the name alone of the blessed man, revered in his tunic and in his books, turned to the timely succour of many districts and people at once.

## NOTES

*Almost fourteen years ago*

Dr. Reeves says: "The substance of this chapter is briefly related in Cummian's Life, where it is prefaced, 'Post mortem viri Dei'—'After the death of the man of God.' Now if this be a genuine work, and if the writer be Cuimine Ailbe, it will follow that the present chapter of Adamnan was written between 679 and 683: for Cummian, who relates the occurrence, died in 669; therefore that is the latest date to which we can add the fourteen years in the text, which brings us to 683, four years after Adamnan's elevation to the abbacy of Iona."

*The Hill of the Angels*

"Colliculum Angelorum." This is the knoll called Sithean Mor, "great fairies' hill," in the Machar or Plain of Iona. Not far away is the Sithean Beg, "little fairies' hill." "The fairies' hills of pagan mythology became angels' hills in the minds of the early Christian saints.

'Tun'd by Faith's ear to some celestial melody.'

In this case there is a special reason for the name."—*Fowler.*

The Hill of the Angels is again referred to further on in Book III.

## XLV

CONCERNING CONTRARY GALES OF WIND  
CHANGED BY THE POWER OF THE VENER-  
ABLE MAN'S PRAYERS INTO FAVOURABLE  
WINDS.

Actual instances of such miracles as we ourselves have seen undoubtedly confirm for us our faith in those of past times which we have not seen. For we ourselves have thrice seen contrary gales of wind changed into favourable ones. The first time was when long boats of hewn pine and oak were being hauled across country, and massive ship and house-building materials as well were being towed away. Taking counsel together, we placed the garments and the books of the blessed man upon the altar with psalms and with fasting and with the invocation of his name that he might obtain from the Lord fair winds on our behalf. Which so came to pass, God granting it to the same holy man; for on that same day on which our sailors, all things beings ready, proposed to tow the beams and the above-mentioned material through the sea with their boats and coracles, the winds, which on the previous days had been contrary, were suddenly changed into favourable ones; and then, God being propitious, with the help of fair winds throughout the whole day, all that flotilla came prosperously through long and winding channels, with full sails and without any detention, to the island of Iona.

But a second time, after an interval of some

years, when twelve coracles had been got together, and other oak timbers, together with ourselves, were being towed from the mouth of the river Sale for the repairing of our monastery; while the sailors one calm day were sweeping the sea with their oars, there suddenly arises against us the west wind, which is also called Zephyr. We then ran for the nearest island, which is called Air-thrago in Irish, seeking there a haven wherein to stay. But in the meantime we complain of that untimely contrariness of the wind, and we begin in a way almost to grumble at our Columba, saying: "Doth it afford thee pleasure, O Saint, this our unfortunate delay? Hitherto we looked for some comfortable solace of our toils from thee, God being propitious, as we thought thee to be a man of some considerable account in the sight of God." This said, after a short interval as it were of a single moment, wonderful to say, and quicker than it can be told, lo! the contrary west wind ceases and the favourable south-east wind blows. The sailors getting the word draw taut the halliards and hoist and square the yards and sails in the form of a cross, and with prosperous and gentle breezes we are wafted without an effort, and arrive at our island that same day, rejoicing in the freight of the timbers with all our helpmates who were in the boats. In no small degree did that peevish grumbling to the holy man, slight though it was, profit us! and what and how great in the Lord's sight is the merit of the Saint whom He Himself heard appears from such a sudden change of the winds.

Then, a third time, in the summer season, after the meeting of an Irish synod, when we were detained for some days by contrary winds among the people of the tribe of Lorne, and had got as far as the Sainean island [Shuna], there the vigil and solemn day of St. Columba found us waiting and very sorrowful, desirous as we were indeed to keep that day as a joyful one in the island of Iona. Wherefore, as before, once again we complained, saying: "Doth it please thee, O Saint, that we should spend to-morrow, the day of thy Feast, among country folk, and not in thy church? Easy is it for thee on the vigil of such a day to obtain from the Lord that the contrary winds be changed into favourable ones, and that we celebrate in thy church the solemn Mass of thy Feast day." That night being over, we rise early in the morning, and, seeing that the adverse winds had ceased, we board our ships, not a breath of wind blowing, and put out to sea; and behold! immediately there springs up behind us the wind from due south, also called Notus. Then at once the sailors joyfully rig up the sails, and so, on that day, God granting it to the blessed man, so easy and rapid and prosperous was our voyage, that, as we at first wished, we arrived at the haven of the isle of Iona after the third hour of the day [9 a.m.]; and after washing our hands and feet entered the church with the Brethren at the sixth hour [noon], and celebrated together the solemnities of Mass on the Feast day of Saints Columba and Baithene [June 9]; on the break of which day, as above

said, we had sailed forth from the far-off Sainean island [Shuna : thirty miles from Iona]. And witnesses of this story above related are yet living ; not two or three only, according to the law, but a hundred and more.

## NOTES

*Long ships of hewn pine and oak*

Hollowed out of trees. One of these ancient canoes, of oak, was found at Brigg in Lincolnshire in 1886. It is 48 feet 6 inches long and 4 feet 6 inches across, and was made from a tree of six feet in diameter, the trunk of which had grown to the height of fifty feet before putting out lateral branches. Similar canoes have been found in the Clyde, the Forth, and in other parts of Great Britain. (See illustration on p. 98.)

*The river Sale*

Probably the Seil, in Lorne.

*For the repairing of our monastery*

The buildings were mostly of timber, *more Scottorum*, stone building being the *mos Romanorum*. Wood was the rule and stone the exception until the twelfth century. The church of Greenstead in Essex affords an early example of a timber church.

*The island Airthrago*

Unidentified ; possibly Arran.

*After the meeting of an Irish synod*

The date of this synod is not recorded, but from the closing words of this chapter it may be inferred to have been held a considerable time before the writing of these memoirs.

*People of the tribe of Lorne*

Kinel Loairn ; the tribe of Lorne, in Argyleshire.



*The island Shuna*

“Saineam Insulam”; in nether Lorne, near its southern extremity.

*Easy it is for thee*

Belief in the power and intercession of saints, as shown in the concluding chapters of this Book, was clearly as earnest and sincere in the early days of the Catholic Church as it is now.

*The haven of Iona island*

If they put in at the nearest landing place, it would be Port-a-churaich. See the map.

*The Feast day of Saints Columba and Baithene*

June 9th: St. Baithene succeeded St. Columba as Abbot of Iona, and died in 599, surviving him only three years. His Acts are preserved in the Codex Salmanticensis at Brussels, and the following is the account of the coincidence of his and St. Columba's Feast day: “On the third day of the week, while St. Baithene was praying at the high altar, the sleep of death fell upon him; but when the Brethren were lamenting around him, Diormit, the servant of Columba, says: ‘Behold, Brothers, ye see that there will not be a long interval between the two Feast days of your Abbots.’ Baithene, as though aroused out of a heavy sleep by these words, says: ‘If I have found grace in the eyes of God, and if I have finished a perfect course in His sight up to this day, I trust in Him that I shall not die until the Feast day of the Founder.’ Which thus in about six days came to pass.” The joint festival is thus mentioned in the “Feilire” of Aengus:—

“They went into the eternal kingdom  
 Into eternal life of brightest splendour,  
 Baithene the noble, the angelical,  
 Columb-Kille the resplendent.”

## XLVI

## ABOUT THE PLAGUE.

And this also, as I think, seems a thing not to be reckoned among the lesser miracles of his power—the plague, which in our times has twice devastated the greater part of the world. For not to mention the other and wider regions of Europe, namely, Italy and the Roman city itself and the Cisalpine Provinces of the Gauls, also those of Spain, separated by the Pyrenean mountain range ; the isles of the sea generally, namely, Ireland and Britain, have been twice devastated by a dreadful pestilence, except two peoples, namely, the people of the Picts and that of the Scots of Britain [the Irish colonists in what is now Scotland], between whom the mountains of the Britannic Ridge [Drum Alban : the Grampians] form a barrier. And although there are not wanting amongst both peoples great sins, by which the Eternal Judge is often provoked to anger, yet hitherto, bearing patiently with both, He has spared them. To whom else can this grace, granted them by God, be attributed except to St. Columba, whose monasteries, founded within the boundaries of both people, have up to the present time been held in high honour by both? But this which we are about to say is not, as we think, to be heard without a sigh, that there are many very doltish people among both races, who, not knowing that they are shielded from diseases by the prayers of the Saints, are ungrateful, and

wickedly abuse God's patience. We, however, give frequent thanks to God, Who also in these our islands guards us from the inroads of plagues, our venerable patron praying for us; and in Saxonia [England] also, on our visit to my friend, King Aldfrid, while the plague had not yet ceased and was devastating many villages up and down the country, the Lord, nevertheless, delivered us from danger as He had done in its first visitation after the war of Ecgfrid, and in the second, two years later, although we walked in the midst of the danger of death; so that not one of my own company died, nor was any one of them troubled by any disease.

This Second Book of Miracles of Power must now be ended, and in it the reader ought to take notice that even of those that are well authenticated many have been passed over so that readers may not be wearied.

HERE IS ENDED THE SECOND BOOK.

#### NOTES

##### *The plague*

The yellow plague which visited Britain and Ireland in the sixth and seventh centuries. In 664 (Adamnan being then forty), Bede says: "A sudden pestilence depopulated the southern coast of Britain, and afterwards extending into the Province of the Northumbrians ravaged the country far and near, and destroyed a great multitude of men . . . This pestilence did no less harm in

the island of Ireland." And in 684 it is recorded in the Irish annals that there was a mortality upon all animals in general throughout the whole world for the space of three years, so that there escaped not one in a thousand of any kind of animals.

*Except two peoples*

The Picts and the Scots, the other two peoples inhabiting the island of Britain, were the Britons and the invading Teutonic tribes collectively known as Saxons.

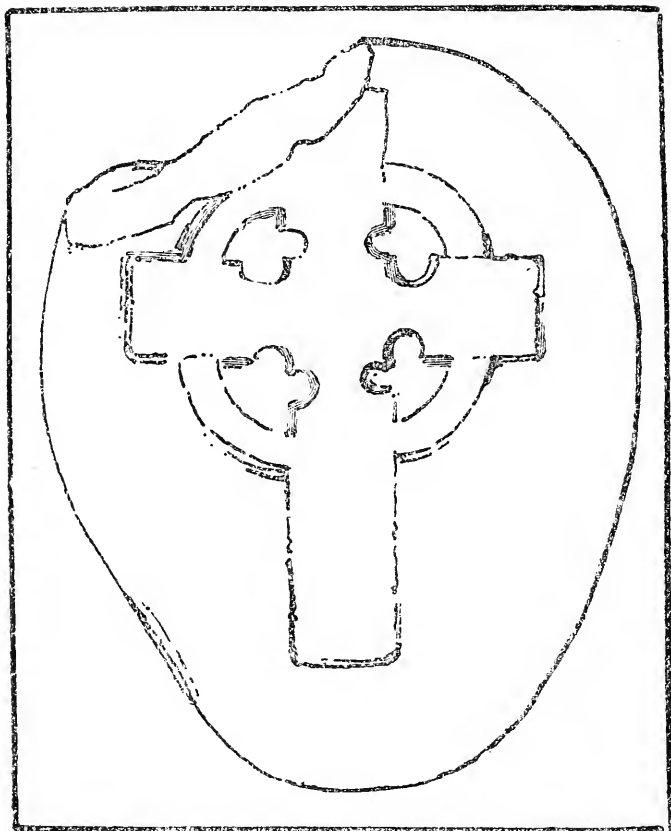
*The Scots of Britain*

Thus Bede calls Aedan "King of the Scots," i.e. of the Irish who inhabit Britain.

*"My friend King Aldfrid"*

Aldfrid, Aldfrith, or Ealdfrith, the Northumbrian Prince, who succeeded his brother Ecgfrith as king in 685, was at the time of Adamnan's accession to the Abbacy of Iona, 679, a refugee in Ireland, and during his exile was under instruction with Irish monks for some time at least at Iona. The Irish knew Aldfrith as Flann Fina Mac Ossa from Fina, his Irish mother, and Oswill his father. He was called the foster-son or alumnus of Adamnan, who appears to have kept up frequent communication with him, and presented to him his book "De Locis Santis," upon the Holy Places.

BOOK III



PILLOW-STONE OF SAINT COLUMBA, IONA (SEE BOOK III. CHAP. XXIII.)

HERE BEGINS THE THIRD BOOK.  
CONCERNING THE VISIONS OF ANGELS.

In the first of these three little books, as has been mentioned above, certain things have been written down shortly and concisely, the Lord helping, concerning Prophetic Revelations. In the Second Book, above, we wrote concerning Power of Miracles which have been made manifest through the blessed man, and which, as has often been said, the gift of prophecy generally accompanies.

But in this Third Book we shall write about Angelic Apparitions which have been revealed either to others concerning the blessed man, or to himself concerning others; and of those which have been revealed in both ways, although in different measures; that is to say, to himself directly and fully, but to others indirectly and partially—that is, by exterior communication and experimentally, although all relate to the same visions of Angels of heavenly light; and these varieties of such visions will be clearly recorded hereafter in their proper places. But now let us begin and describe these same Angelic Apparitions from the first beginnings of the blessed man's birth.

## I

On a certain night, between the conception and the birth of the venerable man, the Angel of the Lord appeared to his mother in sleep, and, standing by her, brought her a certain mantle of marvellous beauty, in which lovely colours of all flowers seemed as it were depicted; and, after a brief interval, he asks for it back, and took it from her hands, and raising and spreading it out sent it forth into the empty air. She, however, saddened by its being taken away, thus speaks to that man of venerable aspect: "Why dost thou thus quickly take away from me this lovely mantle?" He immediately replies: "For the reason that this mantle belongs to one of such grandeur and honourable station that thou canst keep it no longer by thee." And, these words said, the woman saw the aforementioned mantle gradually receding from her in its flight, and increasing in size so as to exceed the width of the plains, and to overtop the mountains and forests; and then she heard this following voice: "Be not sorrowful, woman, for to the man to whom thou art joined by the marriage contract thou shalt bring forth a son so illustrious that, like one of the prophets of God, he will be numbered among them, and is predestined by God to be the leader of innumerable souls to the Heavenly Country." And while she hears this voice the woman awakes.

## NOTE

*Increasing in size*

The old Irish "Life of Columba" describes the mantle reaching from the Inishymoe islands in Clew Bay, on the coast of Mayo, to the north-east coast of Scotland.



## II

OF A LUMINOUS RAY SEEN ON THE FACE OF  
THE BOY HIMSELF AS HE SLEPT.

On another night Cruithnechan, the priest, a man of admirable life, the foster-father of the same blessed boy, returning after Mass from the church of his little dwelling, found his entire house irradiated by bright light : for he saw, indeed, a globe of fire stationary over the face of the little sleeping boy. And seeing it, he immediately trembled with fear, and, falling with face on the ground in great wonder, he understood that the grace of the Holy Spirit was poured out from heaven upon his foster-child.

## NOTES

*Cruithnechan, the priest*

The name is a diminutive of Cruithnech = Pict. It does not occur in the Irish Calendars, but there is a parish in County Derry now called Kilcronaghan, i.e. Kill Cruithnechain.

*The church*

This was Killmicnenain, anciently Doire-Ethne, and now Kilmacrenan, in Co. Donegal. The churches connected with the history of St. Columba's early life are all in this neighbourhood, namely, Gartan, where he was born ; Tulach Dubhglaisse, now Temple Douglas, where he was baptized by the Cruithnechan here mentioned ; Killmicnenain and Rath-enaigh, where he was instructed by Bishop Brugach.

## III

CONCERNING AN APPARITION OF HOLY ANGELS  
WHOM ST. BRENDAN SAW ACCOMPANYING  
THE BLESSED MAN AND WALKING WITH  
HIM ON THE PLAIN.

Now after a long interval of time, when St. Columba was excommunicated by a certain synod for some venial and quite excusable causes—not rightly, as afterwards in the end became clear—he came to the same Assembly which was convened against himself. And when St. Brendan, the founder of that monastery which is called in Irish Birra [Birr], saw him approaching from afar, he quickly rises, and with face bent down reverently kisses him.

And when some seniors of that Assembly, apart from the rest, were chiding him saying: “Why didst thou not refrain from rising up to and kissing one who is excommunicated?” speaking thus to them, he says: “If ye had seen those things which the Lord has not disdained to show to me this day regarding this, His chosen one, whom you dishonour, you would never have excommunicated one whom not only does God in no wise excommunicate, according to your unjust sentence, but even more and more highly exalteth.” They, on the other hand, say: “We would like to know how, as thou sayest, God doth glorify him whom we have excommunicated, and not without cause?” “I have seen,” says Brendan, “a comet-like and

exceedingly bright pillar going before this same man of God, whom ye despise, and holy Angels, also, accompanying him in his walk on the plain. I dare not, therefore, slight this man whom I see fore-ordained by God to be a leader of nations unto life." When he had said these words, not only did they desist, not daring further to excommunicate the Saint, but even honoured him with great veneration. This thing was done in Teilte [Teltown, Meath]."

## NOTES

*Excommunicated by a certain synod*

There is no means, says Reeves, of ascertaining with certainty the date of this synod, or the acts of Columba which it condemned. It was possibly in 561, after the battle of Cul Dreimhne, and Columba's action in bringing about that battle may have been the reason of his excommunication.

*St. Brendan*

Founder of Birr. He must be distinguished from Brendan, founder of Clonfert. They were both contemporary friends of Columba. St. Brendan of Birr died in 573. Birr, "Birra" in the text, is now Parsonstown.

*This thing was done in Teilte*

Teilte, now Teltown, between Kells and Navan in Co. Meath, was famous in old times for a great fair. It was also a seat of royalty, so that the monarch of Ireland was sometimes styled "King of Tailte." The ruins of a church and the remains of a large rath and other ancient works distinguish the site.

## IV

OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD WHOM ST. FINNIAN  
SAW ACCOMPANYING THE BLESSED MAN ON  
HIS JOURNEY.

At another time the holy man, when yet young, went to the venerable bishop Finnian, his former master, by this time an old man. And when St. Finnian saw him drawing near to him, he also saw an Angel of the Lord accompanying him on his journey: and, as is handed down to us by witnesses, he made it known to certain Brethren standing by, saying: "Behold, now, ye may see St. Columba approaching, who has deserved to have an Angel of Heaven as companion of his journey."

It was in those days that the Saint sailed over to Britain with twelve comrades, disciples of his.

## NOTES

*Bishop Finnian*

Probably St. Finnian of Magh-bile (Moville).

*In those days*

In the "Life of Columba" by Cummian, Abbot of Iona, from which much of this third book of Adamnan is derived, the narrative here given ends with the speech of St. Finnian describing the accompanying Angel, and it is the next chapter which begins with "It was in those days, etc.", and goes on with the miracle of the water and wine as in Book II. chapter i. The twelve are thus given in the fifteenth century MS. of Adamnan, Codex B. in the British Museum Royal MSS. 8D ix.: "Duo filii Brenden, Baithene qui et Conin sancti suc-

cessor Columbæ; et Cobthach, frater eius; Ernaan sancti avunculus Columbæ; Diormitius, eius ministrator; Rus et Fechno, duo filii Rodain; Scandal filius Bresail filii Endei filii Neil; Luguid Mocuthemne; Echoid; Tochannu Mocufir-cetea (St. Machar of Aberdeen); Cairnaan filius Branduib filii Meilgi; Grillaan.

## V

CONCERNING THE ANGEL OF THE LORD WHO WAS SENT AND APPEARED IN A VISION TO ST. COLUMBA WHEN SOJOURNING IN THE ISLAND OF HINBA, THAT HE MIGHT ORDAIN AIDAN KING.

At another time, when the illustrious man was staying in Hinba island [Eilean-na Naoimh?], one night in an ecstasy of mind he saw an Angel of the Lord sent to him, who held in his hand a book of glass of the Ordination of Kings, and when the venerable man had received it from the Angel's hand, at his command he began to read it. And when he refused to ordain Aedhan as king according to the direction given to him in the book, because he loved Iogenan his brother more, the Angel, suddenly stretching forth his hand, struck the Saint with a scourge, of which the livid mark remained on his side all the days of his life, and he added these words, saying: "Know thou for certain that I am sent to thee by God with this book of glass, that according to the words which thou hast read in it thou mayest ordain Aedhan to the kingship—and if thou art not willing to obey this command, I will strike thee again." When,

therefore, this Angel of the Lord had appeared for three successive nights, having in his hand that same book of glass, and had pressed the same commands of the Lord concerning the ordination of that king, the Saint obeyed the word of the Lord, and sailed across to the isle of Iona, and there, as he had been commanded, ordained as king Aedhan, who arrived there at that same time. And during the words of ordination he prophesied future events regarding his sons and grandsons and great-grandsons, and laying his hand upon his head, he ordained him and blessed him.

Cuimine the Fair, in the book which he wrote concerning the virtues of St. Columba, thus said that St. Columba began to prophesy as to Aedhan and his posterity and his kingdom, saying : "Believe, O Aedhan, without doubt, that none of thy adversaries will be able to resist thee unless thou first do wrong to me and to those who come after me. Wherefore do thou commend it to thy sons, that they also may commend to their sons and grandsons and posterity, lest through evil counsels they lose from out their hands the sceptre of this realm. For in whatever time they do aught against me, or against my kindred who are in Ireland, the scourge which I have endured from the Angel in thy cause shall be turned upon them, by the hand of God, to their great disgrace, and men's hearts shall be withdrawn from them and their enemies shall be greatly strengthened over them."

Now this prophecy has been fulfilled in our

times in the battle of Roth, when Domhnall Brecc, grandson of Aedhan, devastated without cause the province of Domhnall, grandson of Ainmire. And from that day to this they are in decadence through pressure from without—a thing which convulses one's breast and moves one to painful sighs.

## NOTES

*A book of glass*

“Vitreum Librum” and “Vitreum Codicem.” Some commentators think that this ceremonial book is called “Liber Vitreus” because, perhaps, the cover of it was encrusted with glass or crystal.

*Iogenan*

Brother of Aedhan. He died 595.

*Ordained him and blessed him*

Reeves says, that the service which St. Columba rendered on this occasion was productive of reciprocal advantage, for while it conferred the sanction of religion upon the questionable title of Aedhan, it secured to the Abbot of Iona a prescriptive supremacy in the politico-religious administration of Dalriada. Conventual, not episcopal, rank was what conferred social and political importance on ecclesiastics in the eyes of the Scots at that day, and St. Columba, whose influence was now confirmed by a ten years' successful administration of Iona, in addition to his royal descent, occupied the same relation to the Dalriadic kings that the Abbot of Armagh did to the sovereigns of Ireland.

*Cuimine the Fair*

Cummeneus Albus; in Irish, Cuimine Ailbhe, surnamed also Fionn, or Albus, the Fair, seventh Abbot of Iona, 657-669. He wrote a book, “Devirtatilus Sancti Columbæ”, which Adamnan has incorporated in this third book of his own work on the Saint.

*The battle of Roth*

Magh Rath, either Moira in Co. Down or the neighbourhood of Newry. The battle was fought in 637, and is recorded in the Annals and in an ancient historical romance called "The Battle of Magh Rath," published in the original Irish, with translation and notes, for the Irish Archæological Society in 1842 by Professor O'Donovan. The battle continued with varying success for six days, and on the seventh the Irish king, Domhnall, son of Aedh, son of Ainmire, cousin of St. Columba, was victorious, Domhnall Brec, king of the Irish Scots, hardly escaping to Britain with the remains of his army. He was defeated in another battle by the Picts in Glen Morison, and it is not unlike, says Thomas Innes ("Civil and Ecclesiastical History of Scotland"), that to this decay of the Scots' affairs in Britain, Bede refers as to King Oswald, and Oswy and other Saxon monarchs about this time lording it over the Scots as well as over the Picts and Britons.

*They are in decadence*

The sceptre passed to the house of Loarn after the house of Gabhran had suffered many reverses, of which the rival families of the race took advantage, the Picts, Strathclyde Britons, and the Saxons profiting by the decline of the Dalriadic power.

## VI

CONCERNING AN APPARITION OF ANGELS WHO  
CARRIED TO HEAVEN THE SOUL OF A CER-  
TAIN BLESSED BRITO.

At another time, when the holy man was staying in the isle of Iona, Brito, one of his monks, intent on good works, was seized with bodily illness and brought to the last extremity. And when the venerable man visited him in the hour of his



departure, he stood a little while at his bedside and blessing him, he quickly goes out of the house, not wishing to see him die. And in the same moment after the departure of the holy man from the house, he ended his life. Then the illustrious man, walking in the little court of his monastery, his eyes uplifted to heaven, was for a long time lost in wonder and admiration. But a certain Brother, Aedhan by name, son of Libir, a man religious and of good disposition, who alone of the Brethren was present at the time, began on his bended knees to ask that the Saint would tell him the cause for this so great astonishment. To whom the Saint: "Now have I seen in the air holy Angels warring against the hostile powers, and I give thanks to Christ the Judge that the Angels have prevailed, and have borne up to the joys of the Heavenly Country the soul of this exile, the first who has died among us in this island. But I beseech thee not to reveal this holy secret to anyone during my life."

## NOTE

*Brito*

A British monk at Iona, probably St. Odhran, who, according to the ancient Irish "Life", was the first of Columba's monks to die in Iona. The narrative is as follows: "Colum-Kille said to his people: 'It would be well for us that our roots should pass into the earth here. It is permitted to you that some one of you go under the earth of this island to consecrate it.' Odhran arose quickly, and thus spake: 'If you accept me,' said he, 'I am ready for that.' 'O Odhran', said Colum-Kille, 'you shall receive the reward of this: no request shall be

granted to any one at my tomb unless he first ask of thee.' Odhran then went to heaven. He (Colum) founded the church of Hy (Iona) then." It is remarkable, says Reeves, that the only cemetery in the island is, and has been for many centuries, named after Odhran. "Probably Odhran was the first of St. Columba's fraternity who was interred in the island, and the whole island being called after the patron, the cemetery took its name from the first kinsman of his community who was buried in it." And Fowler remarks upon the curious story above quoted, that it was probably founded upon this narrative of Adamnan or some other tradition of a real conversation between Columba and Odhran, distorted by passing through minds on which pagan ideas retained considerable hold.

## VII

OF A VISION REVEALED TO THE SAME HOLY  
MAN CONCERNING ANGELS WHO BORE TO  
HEAVEN THE SOUL OF ONE DIORMIT.

At another time, a certain Irish wayfarer came to the Saint and remained with him for some months in the island of Iona. To whom one day the blessed man says: "Now is one of the clerics of thy province, whose name I do not as yet know, being carried to heaven by angels." But the Brother hearing this began to bethink himself regarding the province of the Anteriores [Easterns], which is called in Irish Indairthir [East Oriel, in Ulster], and regarding the name of that blessed man; and then he made this remark, saying: "I know another soldier of Christ, named Diormit, who built for himself a little monastery in the same district wherein I also dwelt." To whom

the Saint says: "He it is of whom thou tellest who is now borne to Paradise by the Angels of God."

But this also should be diligently noted—that the same venerable man in no wise allowed to be brought to the knowledge of men many holy secrets, revealed to him by God, but concealed from others, and that for two reasons, as he himself once intimated to a few Brethren, namely, that he might avoid vainglory, and that he might not attract by the fame of his revelations overwhelming crowds of people desirous of making inquiries of him regarding themselves.

#### NOTE

##### *The province of the Anteriores*

The Airtheara (Easterns) inhabiting East Oriel, anciently Airghialla, in Ulster. We have had the name before in chapter xliii. of Book I. The Irish Indairthir is compounded of *ind*, an old form of the article in the nominative plural, and *Airthir*, easterns.

## VIII

CONCERNING A GREAT BATTLE OF ANGELS  
AGAINST DEMONS, AND HOW THEY OPPOR-  
TUNELY ASSISTED THE SAINT IN THE SAME  
CONFLICT.

On another day the holy man, living at the time in Iona, sought among the woodland a place far remote from men and fitting for prayer, and there, as he himself afterwards told a few of the Brethren, when he began to pray suddenly he sees a very

black host of demons fighting against him with iron darts ; and as had been revealed to the holy man by the Spirit, they wished to invade his monastery and with their darts to kill many of the Brethren. But he, one man against innumerable foes—and such foes—taking the armour of the Apostle Paul, fought in brave conflict. And so for the greater part of the day the war was waged on both sides ; neither could they, innumerable as they were, vanquish the one ; nor was he strong enough alone to drive them from his island, until the Angels of God, as the Saint afterwards related to a few persons, came to his aid, and for fear of them the demons, terror-stricken, quitted the place. And on the same day the Saint, returning to the monastery after the flight of the demons from his island, speaks this word about the same hostile bands, saying : “Those deadly foes who, God being propitious and the Angels helping us, have this day been put to flight from the boundaries of this territory to the Ethican land [Tiree], shall there like savage invaders attack the monasteries of the Brethren and bring about pestilential diseases, by the virulence of which many shall be attacked and die. And this in those days came to pass according to the foreknowledge of the blessed man. And after a two days’ interval, the Spirit revealing it to him, he says : “Well has Baithene, by God’s help, managed that the congregation of the church over which by Divine authority he presides in the Plain of Lunge [Tiree] is defended by fastings and by

prayers from the invasion of the demons, for there no one, except the one already dead, will die this time." And this was so fulfilled, according to his prophecy. For while many were dying of the same disease in the other monasteries of that island, no one, except the one of whom the Saint spoke, died at Baithene's monastery of his community.

#### NOTES

##### *The armour of the Apostle Paul*

"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day. . . . Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness. . . . Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (St. Paul to the Ephesians vi.). St. Cuthbert used the same armour when he drove the devils out of Farne (Bede's "Life of St. Cuthbert").

##### *The other monasteries*

of Tiree. Besides the monastery of the Plain of Lunge, Adamnan mentions that of Artchain (I., xxxvi.). "Compared with its extent," says Reeves, "the ecclesiastical remains of Tiree are very numerous. Kilbride, Kilchenich, Kilfinnan, Kilmoluag, Claoth - Odhrain and Templepatrick, commemorative of Saints Brigid, Cainnech, Finnian, Molua, Odhran and Patrick, in the common calendar of Ireland and Scotland, are the names of farms on which there are or were religious houses. Soroby and Kirkapoll, the ancient parish cemeteries, are rich in curious monuments; and vestiges of Christian burials have been found in several other places."

## IX

CONCERNING AN APPARITION OF ANGELS WHOM  
THE MAN OF GOD SAW TAKING UP TO  
HEAVEN THE SOUL OF ONE COLUMB, A  
BLACKSMITH, SURNAMED COILRIGIN.

A certain blacksmith, very devoted to works of charity and full of other good deeds, lived in the midlands of Ireland. When this above-mentioned man Columb, surnamed Coilrigin, had come to his latter end in a good old age, St. Columba, then dwelling in Iona, in the same hour in which he was led forth from the body, thus spoke to some seniors standing around him: "Columb Coilrigin, the blacksmith, has not laboured in vain, for by the labour of his own hands he has obtained eternal rewards—an eager buyer and a lucky one! For behold now is his soul borne by holy Angels to the joys of the Heavenly Country. For whatever he could earn by the exercise of his craft he spent upon alms for the poor."

## NOTE

*Columb Coilrigin*

Possibly of the tribe Calraighe. Columb gobha, i.e. Columb the smith, is in the Calendar, June 7, and may be the Columb of the narrative.

## X

CONCERNING A SIMILAR VISION OF ANGELS  
WHOM THE BLESSED MAN BEHELD BEARING  
TO HEAVEN THE SOUL OF A CERTAIN  
VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

At another time, in like manner, the holy man, while living in Iona, one day suddenly raising his eyes to heaven, said these words : “ Happy woman, happy for thy virtues, thou whose soul God’s Angels are now bearing to Paradise.” Now there was a certain religious Brother, Genere by name, a Saxon and a baker, working at the baker’s trade, who had heard this word proceeding from the mouth of the Saint. And on the same day of the month at the end of the same year, the Saint says to the same Genere, the Saxon : “ I see a wonderful thing. Behold the woman of whom I spoke in thy presence last year is now meeting in the air the soul of her husband, a certain religious peasant, and together with the holy Angels is fighting for it against the envious powers ; and their assistance and the good life of that poor man recommending him, his soul is rescued from the warring demons and conducted to the place of eternal refreshment.”

## NOTE

*Genere, a Saxon*

“ Saxo”, that is an Englishman. Adamnan and others give the name Saxonia to England in general ; to the Irish and Gaelic-speaking Scots an Englishman is a “ Saxon ” to this day.

## XI

OF AN APPARITION OF HOLY ANGELS WHOM ST. COLUMBA SAW MEETING IN ITS PASSAGE THE SOUL OF BLESSED BRENDAN, THE FOUNDER OF THAT MONASTERY WHICH IN IRISH IS NAMED BIRR.

On another day in like manner, while the venerable man was living in Iona, he calls to him early in the morning his oft-mentioned attendant, Diormit by name, and commands him, saying: "Let the sacred requisites for the Eucharist be made ready quickly, for to-day is the Birthday Festival of Blessed Brendan." "Wherefore", says the attendant, "dost thou command that such solemn celebration of Mass should be prepared for to-day? for no messenger of the death of that holy man has come to us from Ireland." Then the Saint says: "Go; thou shouldst obey my order. For last night I saw heaven suddenly opened and choirs of angels descend to meet the soul of the holy Brendan; and by their luminous and incomparable brightness the whole world was illuminated in that hour."

## NOTES

*Birthday Festival*

"Natalis dies"; as in II. xlv. The birthday of the future state; the death-day on earth.

*Blessed Brendan*

Reference has already been made to him in chapter iii. of this book. He died *c.* 573 in the eightieth year of his age. November 29 is his day in the Calendar.



## XII

OF A VISION OF HOLY ANGELS WHO CARRIED  
UP TO HEAVEN THE SOUL OF ST. COLUMBAN  
MOCU LOIGSE, THE BISHOP.

On a certain day again, while the Brethren were putting on their shoes in the morning, and preparing to go to their different occupations in the monastery, the Saint orders them to rest, on the contrary, on that day, and the obsequies of the Holy Sacrifice to be prepared, and some addition to be made to dinner, as on the Lord's Day, "And me", he says, "it behoves to celebrate to-day the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist, unworthy though I be, out of veneration for that soul, which, in this night, borne along among holy choirs of Angels, ascends beyond the starry spaces of the heavens to Paradise."

And the Brethren obey these words, and according to the Saint's command rest on that day, and the sacred ministries having been prepared, they go to the church with the Saint, clad in white as on a feast day. But by chance, when among other offices chanted that usual prayer was sung in which the name of St. Martin is commemorated, the Saint suddenly says to the choristers, when they come to the place where his name occurs: "To-day ye ought to chant for St. Columban, the bishop." Then all the Brethren who were present understood that Columban, a bishop in Leinster, a dear friend of Columba, had passed away to the Lord. And after an interval of some time, people come from

the province of Leinster and announce that that same Bishop died on that night on which it was so revealed to the Saint.

## NOTES

*St. Columban Mocu Loigse*

i.e. Mac U Loighse: of the clan descended from Loighsech Cennmor, son of Conall Cernach, a famous hero of the first century. From him was derived the name of the district of Laighis, afterwards Leix, in Queen's County. The ancient name is preserved in the parish of Abbeyleix.

*The prayer in which the name of St. Martin is commemorated*

“In the ancient Gallican Liturgy, which seems to have been closely followed by the Irish, it was usual for the priest after he had placed the oblation on the altar to say the prayer ‘*Veni Sanctificator.*’ This was followed by the recital from the diptychs of the saints’ names both deceased and living, in whose memory or for whom the offering was made” (*Reeves*). In the form described by St. Aurelianus for the church of Arles (and quoted by Mabillon, “*De Liturgico Gallicano,*” I. chap. v.), the name of Martin, Bishop and Confessor, occurs, the names of the saints being in groups: first the fathers and founders of the church of Arles, then the chief saints of the Calendar, ending with Cæsarius, the Bishop of Arles, who died in 542. As Cæsarius was named in the prayer for local reasons, he was probably omitted in Iona, and St. Martin’s name, which immediately precedes, would thus be the last mentioned. Columba evidently directed the choristers to add the name of Columban after that of St. Martin. Adamnan’s reference to the prayer as ‘that in which St. Martin’s name is mentioned’ is accounted for by the fact that St. Martin was held in special veneration by the Celtic Church on account of St. Patrick’s association with him.

## XIII

CONCERNING AN APPARITION OF ANGELS WHO  
CAME DOWN TO MEET THE SOULS OF THE  
MONKS OF ST. COMGELL.

At another time the venerable man, when he was living in Iona, roused by some sudden impulse, and getting the Brethren together by sound of bell: "Now," he says, "let us help by prayer, the monks of the Abbot Comgell, drowning at this hour in the Lough of the Calf [Belfast Lough], for behold at this moment they are warring in the air against hostile powers who try to snatch away the soul of a stranger who is drowning along with them." Then, after tearful and earnest prayer, quickly rising before the altar among the Brethren who are also prostrate in prayer, he says with joyful countenance: "Give thanks to Christ, for now the holy Angels have met these holy souls, and have delivered that stranger-guest and triumphantly rescued him from the warring demons."

## NOTE

*The monks of the Abbot Comgell*

St. Comgell's great monastery of Bangor, in the Ards of Ulster, was founded in 558. The churchyard only remains to mark the site, but its ancient Antiphony of the eighth century is preserved at Milan. An interesting account of it is given by Dr. Reeves in the first volume of the "Ulster Journal of Archæology", Belfast, 1853.

## XIV

OF A MANIFESTATION OF ANGELS WHO MET  
THE SOUL OF ONE EMCHATH.

At another time the holy man, when making a journey beyond the Ridge of Britain [Drum Alban—the Grampians], near the Lake of the River Nisa [Loch Ness], was of a sudden inspired by the Holy Ghost, and says to the Brethren accompanying him: “Let us hasten to meet the holy Angels who have been sent forth from the highest regions of heaven to bear on high the soul of a certain heathen man, who has preserved his natural goodness through all his life to an extreme old age, and are awaiting our arrival there that we may baptize him in time before he dies.” And thus speaking, the holy old man hastened on before his companions as well as he could, until he came to the district called Airchart-dan [Glen Urquhart], and there a certain old man, Emchath by name, was found, who hearing the Word of God preached by the Saint, and believing, was baptized, and immediately, joyful and safe with the Angels who met him, passed away to the Lord. His son, too, Virolec, also believing, was baptized with his whole house.

## NOTES

*Natural goodness*

“Naturale bonum.” The same is said of another Pict in I. 33.

*Airchart-dan*

The local pronunciation is still Arochdan.

## XV

OF THE ANGEL OF THE LORD WHO CAME OPPORTUNELY, AND IN THE NICK OF TIME, TO THE HELP OF A CERTAIN BROTHER WHO FELL FROM THE TOP OF THE ROUND MONASTERY IN THE PLAIN OF THE OAK WOOD [DURROW].

At another time, while the holy man was sitting writing in his little hut, his countenance suddenly changes, and he pours forth this cry from his pure breast, saying: "Help! Help!" Then two Brethren standing at the door, namely Colgu, son of Cellach, and Lugne Mocublai, ask him the cause of so sudden a cry. To whom the venerable man gave this answer, saying: "I have directed the Angel of the Lord, who was but now standing among you, to go quickly to help one of the Brethren who has fallen from the top of the roof of the great house which is now being built in the Plain of the Oak Wood." And the Saint then added this, saying: "Very marvellous and almost unspeakable is the swiftness of angelic flight, equal, as I think, to the rapidity of lightning. For that Heavenly Citizen who just now flew hence away from us, when that man was beginning to fall, came to his help as it were in the twinkling of an eye, and held him up before he could touch the ground, nor could he who fell feel any fracture or bruise. How amazing, I say, is this most swift and timely rescue which, quicker than words, can

be effected so rapidly, though such stretches of sea and land lie between."

## NOTE

*The Round Monastery . . . the great house*

No doubt the Round Tower of the monastery of Durrow. The present chapter of Adamnan, says Reeves, supplies a most valuable link in the history of the Round Towers. It points to their primary use as monastic abodes known by the name *Monasterium Rotundum*, and regarded as belonging to a class of building called *magna* or *major domus*, as contradistinguished from the humble cells before the time when they took their name of *Cloc teach*, or bell house. "One might wish", adds Reeves, "that Adamnan had used the word *turris* (tower), or the technical term *campanile*; but castles were at that time unknown to the Irish, who would hardly borrow a strange word to denote a familiar object." Notker Balbulus, of St. Gall, writing in the beginning of the tenth century, or in the preceding one, relating this same story, calls the building from which the monk fell *domus altissima*, and speaks of the fall as being *de culmine ejus enormis fabricæ*.

## XVI

## OF A MULTITUDE OF HOLY ANGELS SEEN DESCENDING FROM HEAVEN TO A TRYST WITH THE HOLY MAN.

Again, at another time, one day, the holy man then living in Iona, assembled the Brethren together and charged them with great earnestness, saying to them: "To-day I wish to go alone to the western plain of our island; therefore let none of you follow me." And they complying, he goes forth alone as he wished. But a certain Brother, a

cunning and prying man, going by another way, secretly posts himself on the top of a certain hillock which overlooks the same plain, desiring to find out the cause of the blessed man's going out alone. And when the same spy from the top of the hillock beheld him standing on a certain mound on that plain and praying with hands spread out to heaven and raising his eyes heavenward, wonderful to say, behold! suddenly a marvellous thing appeared, which the same above-mentioned man (as I think not without God's permission) saw even with his bodily eyes from his place on the hill near by, in order that the name of the Saint and the honour due to him, even against his will, might afterwards, through the vision vouchsafed him, be more widely diffused among the people. For Holy Angels, citizens of the Heavenly Country clad in white garments, flying to him with wonderful swiftness, began to stand around the holy man as he prayed, and after some conversation with the blessed man, that celestial band, as if perceiving that it was being spied upon, sped quickly back to the heights of the heavens. And the blessed man himself, having returned to the monastery after the angelic conference, and the Brethren being again assembled, he inquires with no little chiding which of them is guilty of disobedience. And they then protesting they did not know, he who was conscious of his inexcusable transgression, no longer able to hide his fault, suppliantly begs pardon in the midst of the choir of the Brethren in the Saint's presence. And the Saint leading him aside charges him, as he

kneels before him, under heavy threats, that to no man must he reveal anything, even the least particle of the secret of that angelic vision, during the days of the same blessed man. But after the departure of the holy man from the body, he related the apparition of the Heavenly host to the Brethren with solemn attestation. Whence even to this day the place of that angelic conference attests the event which took place upon it by its proper name, which in Latin may be rendered "Colliculus Angelorum," but in Irish "Cnoc Angel." Wherefore it should be understood how great and excellent were those sweet angel-visits to the blessed man, vouchsafed him for the most part on winter nights when he was sleepless in lonely places, while others were at rest, visits which could not by any means come to the knowledge of men, and which were without doubt very numerous. If even some of them were by some means found out by men either by day or night, these without doubt were very few compared with those angelic visits which could be known by no one. This also is to be noted in like manner concerning certain luminous manifestations which were seen by a few, and will be described below.

#### NOTES

*A certain hillock ("monticellus") which overlooks the plain*

No doubt the eminence now known as Cnoc Orain, between the monastery and the plain, commanding a view of the plain and the Saints' standpoint.



*A certain mound on that plain*

“Colliculus Angelorum,” Cnoc Angel, the Hill of the Angels, referred to before in II. xliv. The mound now known as Sithean Mor, the Great Fairy Hill, a round knoll of sand covered with green sward, on the left of the little road which leads to the western shore of Iona.

## XVII

OF A LUMINOUS PILLAR SEEN BLAZING UPON  
THE HEAD OF THE HOLY MAN.

At another time, four holy founders of monasteries, coming over from Ireland to visit St. Columba, found him in Hinba island [Eilean-na-Naoimh, one of the Garveloch Isles?], the names of which illustrious men were Comgell Mocu Aridi, Cainnech Mocu Dalan, Brendan Mocu Alti, Cormac-Ua-Liathain. These with one accord agreed that St. Columba should consecrate the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist in the church in their presence. And he, obeying their command, enters the church together with them according to custom on the Lord's Day, after the reading of the Gospel; and there, while the solemnity of the Mass was being celebrated, St. Brendan Mocu Alti, as he afterwards told Comgell and Cainnech, saw a certain blazing and most luminous globe of fire burning over St. Columba's head and rising up like a pillar as he stood before the altar consecrating the Holy Oblation until the same most holy ministrations were completed.

## NOTES

*Comgell Mocu Aridi*

Comgell was fourteenth in descent from Fiacha Araidhe [A.D. 220], the ancestor of the Dal-Araidhe, whose territory was called Dalaradia, on the eastern shore of Lough Neagh, in Antrim. He was born in 517, founded his church of Bangor in 558, visited Scotland and founded a church in Tiree 565, died 602. His festival is May 10.

*Cainnech Mocu Dalan*

He derived his name from his great-grandfather Dalan, of the race of Ir, King of Ireland. His principal church was Achadh-bo, and he had a monastery in Scotland at Kil-Righ-monaigh (St. Andrew's). His festival is Oct. 11.

*Brendan Mocu Alti*

Already mentioned in I. xxvi. He was St. Brendan the famous voyager, founder of Clonfert, commemorated in the Calendar May 16. Kerry was the principal district of his race, the Kiarraighe. Born 482, founded Clonfert 559, died 577. His day is May 16.

*Cormac-Ua-Liathain*

Already mentioned in I. vi. and II. xlii. Abbot of Dearmagh. He is called by one of the chroniclers "Cormac-Ua-Liathain of the Sea," a name which, as chapter xlii. of Adamnan's First Book shows, was well deserved. Two ancient Irish poems, one a dialogue between Cormac and Columba after Cormac's escape from the perils of the sea, and the other an address to him on coming from Durrow, are preserved in the O'Clery MSS. at Brussels, and are given in the "Additional Notes" of Reeves's edition of Adamnan.

The abbots here mentioned were often together, connected as their lives were by the many churches in the west of Scotland.

*A certain . . . globe of fire*

That is, with comet-like rays streaming from it.

## XVIII

OF THE DESCENT OR VISITATION OF THE HOLY GHOST WHICH, IN THE SAME ISLAND, REMAINED OVER THE HOLY MAN FOR THREE SUCCESSIVE DAYS AND NIGHTS.

At another time, when the holy man was dwelling in the isle of Hinba [Eilean-na-Naoimh], the grace of holy inspiration was marvellously poured forth and abode upon him in an abundant and incomparable manner for three days, so that he remained three days and as many nights, neither eating nor drinking, within the house which was locked and filled with celestial brightness, and he would allow no one to approach him. And from this same house rays of intense brilliancy were seen at night bursting from the chinks of the doors and the keyholes. And certain hymns which had not been heard before were heard being sung by him. But he himself, as he afterwards declared in the presence of a very few persons, saw openly manifested many secrets hidden since the beginning of the world. And some obscure and most difficult passages of the Sacred Scriptures became plain and clearer than the light to the eyes of his most pure heart. He complained that his foster-son, Baithene, was not present, for if he had chanced to be there during those three days, he might have written down many things from the lips of the blessed man unknown by other men—mysteries either concerning past ages or those which were to follow after, and also some explana-

tions of the Sacred Volumes. Baithene, however, could not be present, detained as he was by a contrary wind in the isle of Egea [Eigg], until those three days and as many nights of that incomparable and honour-conferring visitation came to an end.

## NOTE

*The isle of Egea*

Eigg, forty miles north of Iona. St. Donnan, an Irishman and disciple of St. Columba, founded a monastery there, and in 617 perished with his community of fifty-one persons in an attack by pirates. The church of the island is named after him, Kill-donan.

## XIX

OF THE ANGELIC SPLENDOUR OF THE LIGHT WHICH VIRGNO, A YOUTH OF GOOD DISPOSITION, WHO BY THE WILL OF GOD AFTERWARDS PRESIDED OVER THIS CHURCH (OF IONA) WHICH I, THOUGH UNWORTHY, NOW SERVE, SAW DESCENDING UPON ST. COLUMBA IN THE CHURCH ON A WINTER'S NIGHT, WHILE THE BRETHREN WERE AT REST IN THEIR BEDS.

One winter's night the above-mentioned Virgno, burning with the love of God, enters the church alone for the sake of prayer while the others were asleep, and there devoutly prayed in a certain side-chamber which adjoined the wall of the Oratory. And after a considerable interval, of about an hour, the venerable man Columba enters the same

holy house, and along with him a golden light descended from the highest heaven and filled all that part of the church. But the brightness of the same celestial light bursting through the inner door of that chamber, which was just a little ajar, filled the interior of that other little side house where Virgno was doing his best to hide himself—and not without a certain degree of intense fear. And as no one can gaze with direct and undazzled eyes upon the summer and noonday sun, so also Virgno, who saw it, could by no means bear that celestial brightness because that incomparable flood of light much dazzled the sight of his eyes. The above-mentioned Brother was so greatly frightened at the sight of this terrible and lightning-like splendour, that no strength remained in him. But St. Columba, after no prolonged prayer, goes out of the church. And on the morrow he calls to him Virgno, who was very much alarmed, and sighing, addresses him in these few consoling words, saying: “Well pleasing hast thou been in God’s sight this night past, O my child, casting down thine eyes to the ground, terrified as thou wert by the fear of His brightness, for hadst thou not so done thine eyes would have been blinded by the sight of that peerless light. But this thou must carefully observe, never to disclose to any one in my lifetime this manifestation of light.” And so it was that after the passing away of the blessed man this remarkable and wonderful event became known to many through the narrative of the same Virgno. Comman, an

honourable priest, son of Virgno's sister, gave to me, Adamnan, an attested account of the above-recorded vision. And he had also heard the story of it from the lips of his uncle, the Abbot Virgno himself, in so far as he had been able to see it.

## NOTES

*Which I though unworthy now serve*

Adamnan's abbacy was from 679 to 704, and thus this work was written between those years.

*Virgno*

Also Fergno. This was Fergna Brit, fourth Abbot of Iona, 605-623. He was descended from Enna Boghaine, who gave his name to Boghainigh, now Banagh, in western Donegal.

*Comman*

He was brother of St. Cuimine Fionn, seventh Abbot of Iona.

*A certain side chamber*

"Quadam exedra." This was the side house or sacristy, in Irish *Erdamh*, found in many of the existing early buildings, and entered from the interior of the church. G. Petrie, in his "Ecclesiastical Architecture of Ireland", mentions examples of erdamhs at Glendalough and Inis Cathy. The Great Gospel of Columbkille, known as the Book of Kells, was stolen out of the erdamh at Kells in 1005.

## XX

OF ANOTHER ALMOST SIMILAR VISION OF  
BRIGHTNESS FROM ABOVE.

Another night also, one of the Brethren, Colgius by name, son of Aedh Draignich, of the race of Fechreg, of whom we made mention in the first

book (in chapter xvii.), came by chance to the door of the church while the others were sleeping, and, standing there, prayed for a while. And then he sees the whole church filled with celestial light, which light, like lightning, vanished, quicker than words, from his eyes. He did not know, however, that St. Columba was in the church praying at the same time. And after this sudden apparition of light, he returns home in great fear. On the next day the Saint, calling him to him, sharply rebuked him, saying: "Thou shouldst take care from this time, my son, that thou dost not, like a spy, attempt to see the heavenly light, which has not been granted to thee, because it will escape thee; and tell not any one in my days what thou hast seen."

## XXI

### OF ANOTHER SIMILAR APPARITION OF DIVINE LIGHT.

Again, at another time, the blessed man one day gave strict orders to a certain pupil of his, Berchan by name, surnamed Mesloen, who was learning wisdom, saying: "Take care, my son, that thou come not near my little dwelling to-night, as thou art always accustomed to do." And he, hearing this, went, despite the prohibition, to the blessed man's house in the silence of the night while the others were sleeping, and put his eye straight to the keyhole, and slyly peeped, expecting—as the event proved—that some celestial vision

would be manifested to the Saint within. For at that same hour that little dwelling was filled with the splendour of heavenly brightness; and, not bearing the sight of it, the young trespasser instantly fled. And on the morrow the Saint, leading him aside, and rebuking him with great severity, addresses him in these words, saying: "Last night, my son, thou didst sin before God, for thou didst foolishly think that thy crafty and cunning spying could be concealed or hidden from the Holy Spirit. Did I not see thee at that hour coming to the door of my dwelling, and returning thence? and had I not prayed for thee in that same moment, thou wouldst either have fallen dead there before the door or thine eyes might have been torn from their sockets. But the Lord hath spared thee this time for my sake. And know thou this, that thou shalt live riotously in thy native Irish land, and thereafter thy face shall blush with shame all the days of thy life. But this I have obtained from the Lord in my prayers, that because thou art foster-child of ours, thou shalt do penance in tears before thy death and obtain mercy from God." All which things so happened to him afterwards, according to the blessed man's word, as they had been prophesied concerning him.



## XXII

OF ANOTHER APPARITION MANIFESTED TO THE HOLY MAN OF ANGELS WHOM HE SAW SETTING OUT TO MEET HIS HOLY SOUL WHEN IT WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE THE BODY.

At another time, while the blessed man was living in the isle of Iona, his holy face suddenly blossomed into wonderful and joyous cheerfulness, and raising his eyes to heaven, he was filled with incomparable delight, and rejoiced greatly. Then after a brief moment's interval that sweet and savoury rejoicing is turned to mournful sadness. For two men, who were standing at the time at the door of his hut, which was built on a somewhat raised spot, sharing in his sadness, one being Lugne Mocublai, and the other a Saxon [Englishman] called Pilu, inquire the cause of his sudden gladness and that subsequent sorrow. To whom the Saint thus speaks: "Go in peace, and do not now ask of me that the cause either of that joy or of that sorrow should be made known to you." On hearing this, kneeling, in tears, with faces flat on the ground, they earnestly beseech him, and beg of him to let them know something of that which had been revealed to the Saint in the same hour. And seeing them greatly saddened, he says: "Because I love you I am loath you should be sad. Ye must first promise not to disclose to any man during my life the secret which ye ask about." And they immediately and readily promised, accord-

ing to his injunction. And after this promise, the venerable man thus speaks to them, saying: "At this present day, one score and ten years of my sojourn in Britain are completed. Meanwhile, for many days past, I have devoutly asked my Lord that at the end of this present thirtieth year He would release me from my sojourn here and call me at once to my heavenly country. And this was the cause of my rejoicing, about which you, in sorrow, are asking me. For I saw holy angels, sent from the throne on high to meet me, and lead forth my soul from the flesh. But, lo! they have now been suddenly stopped, and are standing on a rock on the other side of the Sound of our island, desirous to approach and call me away from the body. But they are not permitted to come nearer, and must soon return to heaven above, for that which the Lord granted to me, after praying with all my might, namely, that on this day I should pass away from the world to Him, now, quicker than words, He has altered, yielding to the prayers of many Churches for me. And to these Churches, that have been thus praying, it has been granted by the Lord, though against my will, that four years from this day onward are added to my sojourn in the flesh. This, to me, sad delay was—not without reason—the cause of my sorrow to-day. And when, please God, these four years yet to come in this life are ended, my passing away shall be sudden, without any previous bodily illness, and I shall depart, rejoicing, to the Lord in company of the Holy Angels who will then meet me."

According to these words, which, as it is said, the venerable man uttered not without much sighing and sorrow, and even with very many tears, he remained in the flesh for four years more.

## NOTE

The event narrated in this chapter occurred in A.D. 593, thirty years after Columba's settlement in Iona.

## XXIII

## OF THE PASSING AWAY TO THE LORD OF OUR HOLY PATRON, COLUMBA.

Towards the end of the above-mentioned four years, after the completion of which, like a true prophet, he knew from long before that the end of his present life was to come, one day in the month of May, as we have already written in the second book (chap. xxviii.), the old man, weary with age, is borne on a wagon and goes to visit the Brethren while at their work. And while they are busy in the western part of the isle of Iona, he began on that day to speak thus: "During the Easter festival just over in April, 'with desire I have desired' [St. Luke xxii. 15] to pass away to Christ the Lord, as He had even granted to me if I liked. But, lest your festival of joy should be turned into sadness, I preferred that the day of my departure from the world should be put off a little longer." The monks of his household were greatly afflicted whilst they heard these sad words of his, and he began to cheer them as far as he could with words

of consolation. At the close of which, sitting just as he was in the wagon, turning his face eastward he blessed the island, with its islanders. And from that day to this, as is recorded in the above-mentioned book [II. xxviii.], the poison of the thrice cloven tongues of vipers has been powerless to do any manner of harm to man or beast. After those words of blessing the Saint is carried back to his monastery.

Then, after a few days, while the solemnity of the Mass was being celebrated, according to custom, on the Lord's Day, suddenly, with eyes raised heavenwards, the countenance of the venerable man is seen to be suffused with a ruddy glow, for, as it is written: "When the heart is glad the countenance blossoms" [Prov. xv. 13]. For in that hour he alone saw an Angel of the Lord hovering above within the walls of his oratory, and because the lovely and tranquil aspect of the holy Angels sheds joy and gladness in the breasts of the elect, this was the cause of that sudden joy infused into the blessed man. When those who were there present inquired what was the cause of the gladness thus inspired, the Saint, gazing upward, gave them this reply: "Wonderful and incomparable is the subtlety of the angelic nature. For behold! an Angel of the Lord was sent to fetch a certain deposit, dear to God, and after looking down upon us and blessing us within the church, has returned again through the roof of the church, and has left no trace of his passing out." Thus spoke the Saint. But not one of the bystanders

was able to understand the nature of that deposit which the Angel was sent to claim. But our patron gave the name of a "holy deposit" to his own soul, which had been entrusted to him by God. And as will be narrated below, this soul, after an interval of six days from that time, on the night of the next Lord's Day passed away to the Lord.

And so at the end of the same week, that is on the Sabbath day [Saturday], he and his dutiful attendant, Diormit, go to bless the granary which was near by. And on entering it, when the Saint had blessed it and two heaps of corn stored up in it, he uttered these words with giving of thanks, saying: "Greatly do I congratulate the monks of my household that this year, also, if I should perchance have to depart from you, you will have enough for the year without stint." And hearing this word Diormit, the attendant, began to be sorrowful, and to speak thus: "Often dost thou make us sad, Father, at this time of the year, because thou dost make mention so often of thy passing away." To whom the Saint made this answer: "I have a certain little secret chat to hold with thee, and if thou wilt firmly promise me to disclose it to no one before my death, I shall be able to tell thee something more clearly as to my going hence." And when the attendant, on bended knees, had finished making this promise according to the Saint's wish, the venerable man thereupon thus speaks: "In the Sacred Volumes this day is called the Sabbath, which is, interpreted, Rest. And this day is truly a Sabbath day for me,

because it is for me the last day of this present laborious life, on which I rest after the fatigues of my labours ; and this night, at midnight, when begins the solemn day of the Lord, according to the saying of the Scriptures, I shall go the way of my fathers [Jos. xxiii. 14 ; 1 Kings ii. 2]. For already my Lord Jesus Christ deigns to invite me, to Whom, I say, in the middle of this night, He Himself inviting me, I shall depart. For so it has been revealed to me by the Lord Himself." Hearing these sad words, the attendant began to weep bitterly. And the Saint tried to console him as well as he could.

After this the Saint goes out of the granary, and, returning to the monastery, sits down half-way at the place where afterwards a cross, fixed in a millstone, and standing to this day, is to be seen at the roadside. And while the Saint, weary with age as I have said, rested there, sitting for a little while, behold the white horse, a faithful servant, runs up to him, the one which used to carry the milk pails to and fro between the byre and the monastery. He, coming up to the Saint, wonderful to tell, lays his head against his breast—inspired, as I believe, by God, by whose dispensation every animal has sense to perceive things according as its Creator Himself has ordained—knowing that his master was soon about to leave him, and that he would see him no more, began to whinny and to shed copious tears into the lap of the Saint as though he had been a man, and weeping and foaming at the mouth. And the attendant, seeing this, began to

drive away the weeping mourner, but the Saint forbade him, saying: "Let him alone, let him alone, for he loves me. Let him pour out the tears of his bitter lamentation into this my bosom. Lo! now, thou, man as thou art, and possessing a rational soul, couldst in no wise know anything about my departure hence save what I myself have just now told thee: but to this brute beast, devoid of reason, the Creator Himself has clearly in some way revealed that his master is about to go away from him." And so saying, he blessed his servant the horse as it sadly turned to go away from him.

And then, going on and ascending the knoll that overlooks the monastery, he stood for a little while on its top, and there standing and raising both hands he blessed his monastery, saying: "Upon this place, small though it be, and mean, not only the kings of the Scotie people [i.e. the Irish of Ireland and Britain], with their peoples, but also the rulers of barbarous and foreign races, with the people subject to them, shall confer great and no common honour: by the Saints also even of other churches shall no common reverence be accorded to it."

After these words, coming down from the knoll and returning to the monastery, he sat in his hut transcribing the Psalter; and coming to that verse of the thirty-third Psalm, where it is written: "But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing" [Ps. xxxiii. 11 in Vulgate]. "Here", he says, "I must stop at the foot of this page, and what follows let Baithene write."

The last verse which he had written is very applicable to the dying Saint, to whom the good things of eternity shall never be lacking ; and the verse which follows is indeed very suitable to the Father who succeeded him and was the teacher of his spiritual sons, namely : "Come, ye children, hearken unto me : I will teach you the fear of the Lord." And he, Baithene, as his predecessor recommended, succeeded him not only as teacher, but also as a writer.

After transcribing the verse at the end of the page, as above mentioned, the Saint enters the church for the vesper mass of the vigil of the Lord's Day, and as soon as this is over, he returns to his cell and sits up throughout the night on his bed, where he had the bare rock for pallet and a stone for pillow, which to this day stands by his grave as his monumental pillar.\* And so, there sitting up, he gives his last commands to the Brethren, his attendant alone hearing them, saying : "These my last words I commend to you, O my sons, that ye have mutual and unfeigned charity among yourselves, with peace : and if, according to the example of the holy Fathers, ye shall observe this, God, the Comforter of the good, will help you ; and I, abiding with Him, will intercede for you ; and not only will the necessaries of this present life be sufficiently supplied by Him, but the rewards of the good things of Eternity, prepared for those who keep His Divine commandments, shall also be bestowed."

Thus far, told in brief narrative, are put down

\* See illustration on p. 186.



the last words of our venerable patron as he was passing away from this weary pilgrimage to the heavenly country.

After which, as the happy last hour gradually approached, the Saint was silent. Then, when the bell began to toll at midnight, rising in haste he goes to the church, and running faster than the others he enters it alone, and on bended knees falls down in prayer at the altar. At the same moment Diormit, his attendant, who followed more slowly, sees from a distance the whole church filled within with Angelic light round about the Saint. And as he drew near to the door, the same light which he had seen suddenly withdrew, and this light a few others of the Brethren who stood afar off also saw. Diormit, therefore, entering the church, moans out with mournful voice: "Where art thou, Father?" And as the lights of the Brethren had not yet been brought in, groping his way in the dark he finds the Saint lying before the altar, and raising him up a little and sitting down by him he lays the holy head on his bosom. And meanwhile the community of monks, running up with lights, began to weep at the sight of their dying Father. And as we have learned from some who were there present, the Saint, his soul not yet departing, with open eyes upturned, looked round about on either side with wonderful cheerfulness and joy of countenance on seeing the holy Angels coming to meet him. Diormit then lifts up the holy right hand of the Saint that he may bless the choir of monks. But

the venerable Father himself at the same time moved his hand as much as he was able, so that what was impossible to him to do with his voice at his soul's departure he might still do by the movement of his hand, namely, give his blessing to the Brethren. And after thus signifying his holy benediction, immediately breathed forth his spirit. And it having left the tabernacle of the body, the face remained so ruddy and wonderfully gladdened by the vision of the Angels that it seemed not to be that of one dead, but of one living and sleeping. Meanwhile, the whole church resounded with sorrowful wailings.

But, it seems, I should not omit to mention what in the same hour of the passing away of that blessed soul was revealed to a certain Saint in Ireland. For in that monastery which in the Irish tongue is called Cloni-finchoil ["The meadow of the white Hazel": perhaps Rosnarea, on the Boyne], there was a certain holy man, a veteran soldier of Christ, just and wise, who was named Lugud, son of Tailchan. Now this man early in the morning, with great sorrow, narrated to one who like himself was a soldier of Christ, Fergno by name, a vision of his, saying: "In the middle of the past night the holy Columba, pillar of many churches, passed away to the Lord; and in the hour of his blessed departure I saw in spirit the island of Iona, to which I have never been in the body, all resplendent with the brightness of Angels, and the whole space of the sky, up to the heaven of heavens, illumined by the splendour of the same. Angels were sent

from heaven, and came down in troops to bear upward his holy soul. High-sounding hymns also, and exceeding sweet canticles of the Angelic Hosts, did I hear in the same moment that his holy soul departed amidst the angelic choirs as they soared on high. Virgno [i.e. Fergno], who rowed over in those days from Ireland and remained for the rest of the days of his life in the isle of Hinba [Eileanna-Naoimh?], used often to narrate to the monks of St. Columba this angelic vision, which, as aforesaid, he had undoubtedly heard from the lips of that aged Saint to whom it had been revealed. And this same Virgno, after many years passed blamelessly and in obedience among the Brethren, completed twelve more years in a place of anchorites in Muirbulmar [? Hinba], leading the life of an anchorite as a victorious soldier of Christ. This above-mentioned vision we have not only found recorded in books, but we have without any mistake learned it from several well informed aged men to whom Virgnous himself had told it.

At the same hour also another vision, revealed in another guise, a soldier of Christ, one of those who witnessed it, related with solemn attestation to me, Adamnan, at that time a youth. He was a very old man, whose name may be rendered as "Ferreolus," but in Irish Ernene [diminutive of Iarn, *iron*], of the clan Mocuifirroide, who, himself also a holy monk, is buried in the Ridge of Tomma [Drumhome, in Donegal] among the remains of other monks of St. Columba, awaiting the resurrection of the Saints. He said: "On that night on which

St. Columba, by a happy and blessed end, passed away from earth to heaven, I and other men with me, while at work catching fish in the valley of the fish-abounding river Fend [the Finn, in Donegal], saw the whole expanse of the sky suddenly illuminated; and, struck by the suddenness of this miracle, we turned our upraised eyes to the east, and lo! there appeared as it were an immense pillar of fire, which, rising upwards at that midnight hour, seemed to us so to lighten the whole world, just as does the summer and meridian sun; and, just as after the setting of the sun, so, after that pillar had penetrated the heavens, darkness followed. And not only did we who were there together at the same place see with exceeding great wonder the brightness of this luminous and wonderful pillar, but many other fishermen also, who were scattered fishing in various pools of the same river, as they afterwards told us, were greatly terror-struck at the sight of the like apparition.

The miracles, therefore, of these three visions, appearing at that hour of the passing away of our venerable patron, bear witness to the eternal honours conferred upon him by the Lord.

Let us return now to our main subject.

Meanwhile, after the departure of his holy soul, the matin hymns being ended, the sacred body is carried with melodious psalmody from the church to the house, whence, a little while before, he had come alive; and for three days and as many nights his honourable obsequies are performed with due observance. And these being ended with sweet

praises of God, the venerable body of our holy and blessed patron, wrapped in a fair shroud and placed in the tomb prepared for it, is buried with due reverence, to rise again in resplendent and eternal brightness.

Now, near the close of this book, shall be narrated what has been handed down to us by well-informed persons concerning those above-mentioned three days' obsequies, which were carried out in the usual ecclesiastical form. For, indeed, on one occasion a certain one of the Brethren, speaking in all simplicity in the presence of the venerable man, says to the Saint: "After thy death all the people of these provinces will sail across hither, and fill this isle of Iona." And, hearing these words, the Saint thereupon says: "O my child, the event will not prove to be as thou dost say, for a promiscuous crowd of common people will by no means be able to come to my obsequies. Only the monks of my house will perform my burial rites, and honour my funeral offices." Which prophetic saying of his the omnipotence of God caused to be fulfilled immediately after his passing away, for, during those three days and nights of the obsequies, there arose a great tempest of wind without rain which effectually prevented anyone in a boat from crossing over the Sound hither from the other shore. And after the burial of the blessed man was over, the tempest was at once stayed, and the wind ceased, and the whole sea became calm.

Let the reader consider how great and singular

is the honour our illustrious patron enjoys in the sight of God, to whom at times when he abode in mortal flesh God granted at his prayer that storms should be stilled and seas made calm ; and again when there was need, as on the above-named occasion, at the close of his funeral rites, as afore mentioned, gales of wind arose, and the billowy waters were lashed by the hurricane, and were presently changed into a great calm.

Such, then, was the end of our illustrious patron's life, and these the first instances of his meritorious intervention. To use the words of Scripture, he shares in eternal triumphs ; he is linked with the Apostles and Prophets ; he is joined to the number of the white-robed thousands of Saints who have washed their robes in the Blood of the Lambkin ; he follows the Lamb whithersoever He leadeth ; he is a virgin without spot, free from all stain, through the favour of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to Whom, with the Father, is honour, power, praise, glory, and everlasting rule, in the Unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

After reading these little books, let each diligent reader take note of how great and singular merit was the so oft-named holy Abbot ; in how great and singular honour he was accounted in the sight of God ; how great and how singular were those bright and frequent angel-visits made to him ; how great was his gift of prophecy ; how great the efficacy of Divine graces ; how great and how frequent the sheen of the Divine light that shone round about him while he was abiding in this

mortal flesh ; and even after the departure of his sweet soul from the tabernacle of its body, as was shown to some chosen witnesses, this same heavenly brightness and frequent visits of Angels do not to this day cease to haunt the place where his sacred bones repose. And this great favour has also been granted to this same man of blessed memory, that, although he lived in this small and remote isle of the British Ocean, his name has deserved to be honourably made known, not only throughout the whole of our Ireland and Britain, largest of the islands of the whole world, but to reach even as far as triangular Spain, and the Gauls, and Italy, that lies beyond the Pennine Alps, even to the City of Rome itself, which is the head of all cities. So great and so singular is the remarkable honour known, among other marks of Divine favour, to have been conferred upon this Saint by God, Who loves those who love Him, and glorifies more and more those who glorify Him with sweet Lauds, and lifts them up on high to honours unbounded, Who is blessed for evermore. Amen.

I beseech those, whoever they may be, who wish to transcribe these books—yea, rather, I charge them, by Christ the Eternal Judge—that, after they have diligently transcribed them, they compare and correct them with all carefulness with the copy from which they have written ; and that they also transcribe this charge in this place :—

WHOSOEVER READS THESE BOOKS OF THE  
MIRACLES OF COLUMBA, LET HIM PRAY  
GOD FOR ME, DORBBENE, THAT AFTER  
DEATH I MAY POSSESS ETERNAL LIFE.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER XXIII

*During the Easter festival last April*

Easter Day fell on April 14th in 597, the year of St. Columba's death.

*When the heart is glad, etc.*

Prov. xv. 13. This version is not from the Vulgate, which has, "A glad heart maketh a cheerful countenance." The quotation in the text may be from memory only.

*At the end of the same week, that is on the Sabbath day*

Our Saturday. Saturday is still Sabbath in the service books of the Catholic Church and in correct English.

*At the place where afterwards a cross fixed in a millstone is to be seen*

The cross known as Maclean's Cross, in Iona, is the only one now remaining in the island whose position corresponds to the description in the text. Mr. H. D. Graham (in "Antiquities of Iona", 1850) says: "To the south of the Cathedral there is a cross of a very ancient date. It is of one stone about eleven feet in height, including the pedestal. It is of the hardest whin-rock, and though it has the appearance of great age, it is but little impaired. This cross is of a different form and apparently of a different era from any other in the Highlands."

*Ascending the hill that overlooks the monastery*

The original monastery was about three hundred yards to the north of the mediæval ruins, and the hill here mentioned was probably the rocky knoll called Cnoc-na-bristeadh-clach, which is just outside the remains of the Vallum.



*Upon this place . . . kings . . . shall confer honour*

Iona was, in fact, the chosen burial place of many illustrious kings. It is stated in the *Scotichronicon* that the monastery of the monks of Iona was "the burial place and the royal seat of almost all the Scotie and Pictish kings to the time of King Malcolm, the husband of St. Margaret" (she died 1093). Sir D. Monro, who was High Dean of the Isles, and visited most of them in 1549, mentions "three tombes of staine formit like little chapels" as existing in the cemetery, Reilig Oran of Iona, inscribed respectively in Latin as Tomb of the Kings of Scotia, Hybernia and Norwegia; 48 Scottish, 4 Irish and 8 Norwegian kings, says Sir Donald, "according to our Scotts and Erische cronikels", are there buried.

#### *Vesper mass*

The word Mass is here applied to the Evensong. The Sacrifice of the Mass proper was celebrated only in the morning.

#### *A stone for pillow*

A stone marked with a cross, and exactly of a form suitable for a pillow, is still shown at Iona as that of St. Columba. It was found by Mr. Alexander M'Gregor within twenty yards of the large boulder of granite under which St. Columba was said to have been buried. A part of the stone was broken off by a farmer's cart passing over it. A cross is incised upon it. Mr. Drummond was inclined to regard this stone as possibly the pillow stone referred to here by Adamnan. It is now in the Abbey. In the Septuagint (Genesis xxxi. 45) the Greek is *καὶ ἔστησεν αὐτὸν στῆλην*, rendered in the Vulgate "Et erexit illum in titulum."

Two other similar stones are known, one found at Coldstone, Aberdeenshire, and another one near the Cathedral in Iona. Of them Mr. Joseph Anderson, in *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 1881, says that they belong to an earlier type than the more decorated

monuments, being the plainest and simplest monuments which it is possible to conceive—stones unshaped and unerected, and merely marked with the symbol of the cross.”

It would appear from the words in the text relating to this stone and the grave of the Saint, that at least a century elapsed before his remains were disinterred. They were enshrined, however, before the year 824, as we learn from Walafridus Strabo's (ninth century) verses on the Martyrdom of St. Blaithmac of Iona in the Danish invasion. (See Messingham's *Florilegium Insulæ Sanctorum*, 1624, p. 402.) (See illustration on p. 186.)

*And as we have learned from some who were there present*

St. Columba died in 597, and St. Adamnan was born 624, so that the information of eye-witnesses was quite easily available for Adamnan.

#### *A place of anchorites in Muirbulcmar*

Muirbulcmar means “sea-inlet of the sea”, probably in the isle of Hinba, which is now generally identified with Eilean-na-Naoimh. There are interesting beehive cells on that island, one of which may well have been tenanted by Virgnous. We had Muirbolc Paradisi in Book I. chapter xii. Adamnan tells us that Virgno remained the rest of his life after the twelve years spent with the Brethren in the isle of Hinba, and a few lines further on tells us that he completed twelve years more at Muirbulcmar. Muirbulcmar was certainly, therefore, in the island of Hinba.

#### *The place in which his sacred bones repose*

Thus it appears that during a century at least after the Saint's death his remains were undisturbed. In the course of the eighth century it is probable that his bones were disinterred and deposited in a shrine. The shrine, as Walafridus Strabo tells us in his verses on the Martyrdom in Iona at the hands of the Danes of St.

Blaithmac (in 825), was the chief object of the murderous Northmen's search—

Ad sanctum venere patrem, pretiosa metalla  
 Reddere cogentes, queis Sancti sancta Columbæ  
 Ossa jacent, quam quippe suis de sedibus arcam  
 Tollentes tumulo terra posuere cavato,  
 Cespite sub denso gnari jam pestis iniquæ :  
 Hanc prædam cupiere Dani.

St. Blaithmac was brutally murdered because he refused to disclose the hiding-place.

*“Blood of the Lambkin”*

A bold instance of the Celtic diminutive of endearment, so characteristic of Adamnan's style.

*Whosoever reads these books*

It was the custom of Irish Scribes thus to put their names, and to solicit the prayers of their readers at the end of their manuscripts. Dorbbene, the writer of this one, the famous Codex A now in the public library of Schaffhausen, was Abbot of Iona, and died in the year 713, only nine years after the death of Adamnan. The frontispiece of this book is from a photograph of the beginning of the manuscript from Dr. Reeves's facsimile.

## NOTES TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS

### *Map of Scotland, A.D. 500-560*

Throughout his narrative Adamnan, when speaking of the north-eastern part of what we now call Ireland, uses the word SCOTIA, nowhere applying that term to what we now call Scotland.

It is important to bear in mind the following facts:—

(1) The Celtic name of Northern Britain was Alban, or Albu. Scotland was not the name of any part of it until about A.D. 930, more than three hundred years after the time of St. Columba.

(2) The Latin name 'Scotia' was used only as the name of Ireland, also called Hibernia. Both names are of frequent occurrence in Adamnan, and applied exclusively to Ireland.

(3) The Irish clan Dalriada (Dal-Araidhe) in possession of the county of Antrim, facing the great promontory of Kintyre which juts out towards them from North Britain, established themselves, in the beginning of the sixth century, if not earlier, in the southern part of what we call Argyleshire; so that there were after that date the Irish and the Scottish Dalriads, or to speak more correctly, the Scotie Dalriada and the Dalriada of North Britain. This division of the Dalriads is thus chronicled in the ancient annals: 'The Dal Riada were those about whom there was a contention between the men of Alba and the men of Erin, because they were both of the race of Cairbre Righfada, that is of the men of Munster. For upon the occasion of a great famine

which came upon Munster the descendants of Cairbre Righfada left it, and one party of them went to Alba and the other party stayed in Erin, from whom are the Dalriada at this day.'

(4) The Picts and the Britons, Celtic races, were settled in North Britain before the Irish came in from the west or the English from the east. Pictland occupied the greater part from the Firth of Forth to John-o'-Groat's and beyond to the Orkneys; and on the west the island of Skye and the western coast line as far as the southern limits of the present county of Inverness, including all or most of the island of Mull.

(5) The Britons were settled along the whole western part of Britain from Dumbarton on the Clyde to Cornwall. It was in Columba's time that the continuity of this long strip of British land was broken by the victories of the West Saxons at Deorham near the Severn in 577, and (not long after Columba's death) of the English of Bernicia in 613.

(6) The English of Bernicia were settled east of the Britons of Strathclyde. The Bernician kingdom was established by King Ida in 549, when St. Columba was twenty-eight years old. It stretched from the Tees to the Firth of Forth. A hundred years after Ida, King Edwin fortified the rock of Edwin's burg, or Edinburgh. Two curious facts thus become clear, namely, that the original Scotia was Ireland, and the name of the capital of Scotland is English.

(7) Thus we have four kingdoms in Northern Britain in the time of St. Columba: the Picts, the Britons, the English, the Dalriads. It is with the Picts and the Dalriads that Adamnan's narrative is chiefly concerned. Dalriada included the present county of Argyle, the islands of Jura and Islay and the peninsula of Kintyre,

and it was divided from the great kingdom of the Picts by the mountain range of Drum Alban (the Grampians), often referred to by Adamnan as the 'Dorsum Britanniae', the 'Backbone of Britain.' The first great step, says Mr. D. W. Rannie (*History of Scotland*), 'toward the making of the kingdom of Scotland was the *union of the Picts and Scots*, of Pictland and Dalriada. This great event was led up to and largely brought about by the Mission of St. Columba.'

*Book I. ch. v.: 'His mother church'*

It would seem from Adamnan's narrative, and especially from the forty-fifth chapter of Book II., that the buildings of St. Columba's monastery on Iona were largely constructed of timber, and we have but little means of ascertaining the character of such constructions. If, however, as seems likely, some of the buildings were of stone, they would no doubt conform in type to the well-known 'beehive cells' and stone oratories of the primitive Irish Church, of which many examples remain in Ireland and in Scotland. The example here chosen to illustrate the text (assuming that the church of the monastery of Iona may have been a stone-built one) is the famous ancient oratory on the island of Inchcolm in the Firth of Forth. It is irregular in plan, the boulders among which it stands preventing symmetry, and measures only 21 feet 6 inches in its greatest length, and 6 feet 3 inches in its greatest width. Professor Daniel Wilson, in referring to this little building in his *Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, II., 366, says: 'A common origin and the dialects of a common language united the Celtic populations of Ireland and Scotland, and the evidence of the wide diffusion of Christianity

among the Picts and Caledonians by the disciples of St. Columba is indelibly preserved in the association of their names with a thousand local memories and traditions. . . . While the primitive oratories of the first centuries of Scottish Christianity were to be looked for with the greatest probability among the Hebrides, which abound in such sites as were most in favour with the ascetic missionaries of the new faith, it is within sight of the Scottish capital that one of the oldest memorials of Scottish architecture has been discovered . . . on the island of Inchcolm, on which, amid ecclesiastical ruins of later date, a rudely arched little structure has long been shown as the cell of the good hermit of St. Columba. Professor J. Y. Simpson demonstrated its correspondence to some of the most ancient oratories associated with the primitive Irish evangelists, and submitted a series of drawings of it to Dr. Petrie, of Dublin, who, without any knowledge of its site or history, at once pronounced the building to be a "Columban cell." It is recorded in Boece's history that King Alexander I. of Scotland (1107-1124), driven on the island by a storm, found shelter with the hermit. The King, says Boece, was 'constraint be violent tempest to remane thre dayes, sustenand his life with skars fude, be ane heremit that dwelt in the said inche, in quhilk he had ane little chapell dedicat in the honour of Sanct Colme.' 'But', says Professor Wilson, 'we may now recognise in this homely shelter of royalty an oratory of greatly older date, erected in all probability by one of the earliest disciples of Saint Columba who made his way from Iona to the eastern territories of the Picts.' Among other early stone monastic cells and oratories of contemporary date with or even earlier than St. Columba are the Tigh Beannaichte, or 'Blessed House', on Gallon Head in the

Isle of Lewis; the chapel of St. Flann, a primitive cell of rude polygonal masonry on Eilean Mor, north of the island of Coll, the Teampull Rona, or chapel of St. Ronan or Eilean Rona, and the Teampull Sula Sgeir on the little island of the latter name. All of these have been illustrated by Mr. T. S. Muir (*Characteristics of Old Church Architecture in the Mainland and Western Isles of Scotland*). Dr. Reeves describes a little chapel in the Isle of Skye which exhibits such obvious characteristics of the earliest type of native Christian architecture that he is disposed to assign it, and a cyclopean cashel beside it, if not to St. Columba himself, to one of his disciples. Other buildings of the same class exist on Eilean Naoimh (the Helant-leneou of the chroniclers, and probably the Hinba and Elena island of Adamnan), a small uninhabited island off the coast of Argyle, which Mr. Cosmo Innes (in *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*) considers as perhaps the oldest vestiges of the sort now standing in Scotland. 'The crowd of low buildings', he says, 'has all the appearance of a monastic establishment.' The illustration here given of the Inchcolm Oratory is from Professor J. Y. Simpson's paper upon it.

*Bell of St. Columba* (Book I. ch. viii.)

The illustration is from the Bell of St. Columba in the Dungannon Collection. Mr. Wilson (*Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, 1863) says of it that it was preserved for many generations in the family of the McGurks, from whose ancestors the parish of Termon Maguirk, in the county of Tyrone, takes its name. This bell was held by the native Irish, even of the present generation, in peculiar veneration; and though usually called by them the Clog-na-Choluimchille, or



Bell of St. Columbkil, it also bore the name of *Dia Dioghaltus* ('God's Vengeance'), alluding to the curse believed to fall on any who perjure themselves by swearing falsely on it. This bell was used until very lately throughout the county of Tyrone in cases of solemn asseveration. Bells were among the most venerated objects of the primitive Celtic Church. They were introduced by the first Christian missionaries, and summoned the Brethren of Iona to prayer while yet the '*gloriosum cœnobium*' of the sacred isle was only a few wattled huts. The reference of Adamnan to St. Columba's bell, when he had notice that King Aidan was going forth to battle, sufficiently indicates its use (Book I. ch. viii.). The little handbell would abundantly suffice to summon together the band of pioneers in the wilderness of Iona. It is  $11\frac{1}{4}$  inches in height.

#### *St. Patrick's Bell*

This ancient bell, rudely made of hammered iron, riveted, and coated with bronze, is  $7\frac{3}{4}$  inches in height, including the handle, and it is contained in a rich shrine of bronze, gold, and silver, exquisitely decorated, made for the bell in the eleventh century. Long before that time the bell was regarded with extraordinary reverence, and attributed to St. Patrick. 'The beauty, richness, and intricacy of the workmanship of the shrine', says Mr. Anderson (*Scotland in Early Christian Times*, I. 202), 'disclose to us the taste and skill prevailing at the time, and indicate likewise the degree of veneration felt for the rude object of hammered iron to which so magnificent a work of art was given as a covering. Bell and shrine are now among the most valued treasures of the Museum of the Royal Irish Academy.'

*The Bachuill Mor ('Big Staff') of St. Moloc*  
(Book II. ch. xiv.)

This ancient staff was preserved for centuries at Lismore, and is now in the possession of the Duke of Argyle. It is slightly curved, and nothing remains of its once costly ornamentation, added to it probably after the death of the Saint, except a few rivets and fragments of copper casing.

'The right of curatorship of this staff', says Dr. Daniel Wilson (*Prehistoric Annals of Scotland*, 1863, II. 479), 'and probably also of bearing it before the bishops of Argyle, appears to have been hereditary, and conferred on its holders the popular title of Barons of Bachuill, and the possession of a small freehold estate, which remained in the hands of the lineal descendant of the old staff-bearer till within the last few years. This estate was latterly held under a deed granted by the Earl of Argyle in 1544, the ancient crosier being preserved in verification of the right till it was recently delivered up in return for new titles granted in order to enable the late owner, the last of his race, to dispose of the freehold which could no longer descend to his heirs.

'The original charter of confirmation grants, "Dilecto signiffero nostro Johanni McMolmore vic Kevir, et heredibus suis masculis . . . omnes et singulas nostras terras de dimidietate terrarum de Peynebachillen et Peynehallen . . . in Insula de Lismor, cum custodia magni baculi beati Moloci. . . .'"

*Ancient Car on a Sculptured Stone at Meigle in Perthshire* (Book II. ch. xliii.)

This stone, which perished in the burning of the old church in 1869, was one of many remarkable early

sculptured stones at that place. Those which remain are now preserved in the old school house. The car here shown is a covered car, drawn by two horses, and in a description of the monument of which this stone formed a portion, written in 1569, it is said that it was called by some the 'Thane Stone', that it 'had a cross at the head of it and a goddess next that in a cart, and two horses drawing her, and horsemen under that and footmen and dogs.' And the writer goes on to say that it was alleged that the Thane of Glamis set there that stone and another, a cross curiously graved, 'when that country was all a great forest.'

*Long, hollowed-out boats of pine and oak*

(Book II. ch. xlv.)

Such a boat as those here described was discovered in 1886 at Brigg, in Lincolnshire, and is described in the fiftieth volume of *Archæologia* by Mr. Alfred Atkinson. It was found, he says, during the excavation of a pit at the Brigg gasworks, lying at a depth of two to three feet beneath the surface of the ground, and at right angles to the old channel of the river Ancholme. The boat is made out of one immense log of oak which has been 'dug out', or hollowed. The length of the boat is 48 feet 6 inches, and the width from 4 feet 3 inches at the bows to 4 feet 6 inches at the stern, with an outside depth of 2 feet 8 inches forward and 3 feet 4 inches aft. In each bow there is a hole a foot in diameter, plugged up. The grain of the wood shows that these holes are the places where the first great branches of the tree grew. The stern is formed by a separate board. Mr. Atkinson found that by drawing sections of the boat to scale the smallest circumscribing circle at the stern is 5 feet 4 inches

in diameter, and Mr. W. Stephenson, of Scarborough, an authority upon trees and timber, states that there are no large trees now growing in England that can compare in size with the enormous tree of which this boat was constructed. There are trees of larger diameter, but the length of the trunk is much less. The natural habit of oak trees is to throw out branches within a few feet of the ground, and it is only when growing in a dense forest closely surrounded by other trees that a straight stem shoots up to such a height devoid of branches. Although it is probable that this dug-out boat was made and used in pre-Roman times, it is just such boats, hollowed in just such a manner, as would no doubt have formed the freight vessels of which Adamnan speaks in this chapter. The accompanying illustration is drawn from Mr. Atkinson's paper in *Archæologia*.

*Saint Columba's Pillow-stone* (Book III. ch. xxiii.)

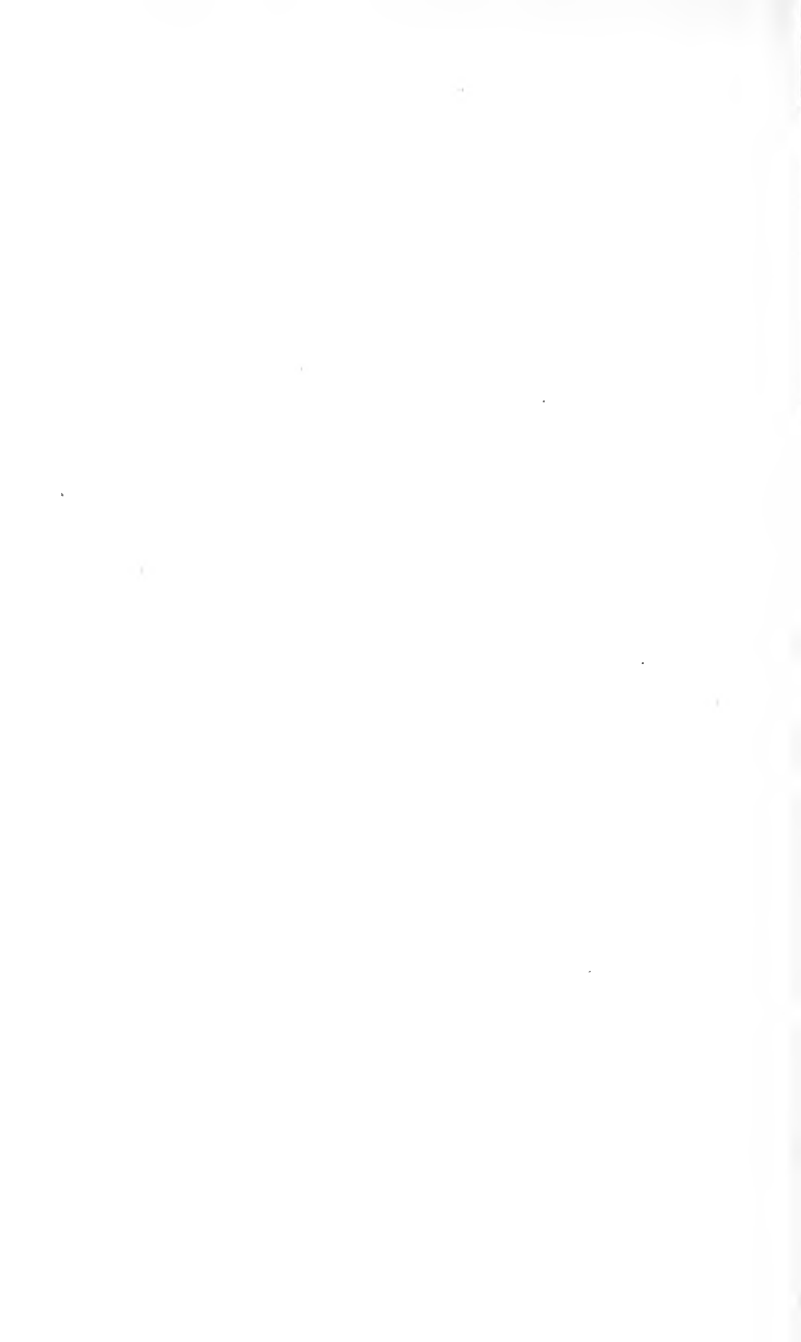
This rounded granite stone, 20 inches long, 15½ inches broad, was found by Dr. Alexander McGregor lying on the ground about 150 yards distant from the Cladh-au-Disert ('Burial place in the Desert'), Iona, and within twenty yards of the large granite boulder beneath which, according to tradition, St. Columba was buried. The stone is sculptured with a cross. A part of the upper part was broken off by the wheel of a farmer's cart passing over it. This stone is now preserved in the Abbey Church. Mr. James Drummond, writing about it in 1875 (*Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol. x., p. 615), says that 'from its shape it could have been of no use as a gravestone, but it might have been used to lie on the top of a grave; its rounded shape would not have prevented this. The only use to which I could imagine such a stone

really to have been put would be to place it in a grave; and my conjecture is that when the remains of St. Columba were enshrined this stone, with the sacred emblem carved upon it, was put in the place where the Saint's body had lain.' Mr. Joseph Anderson, however, called Mr. Drummond's attention to the passage in Adamnan's *Life of Saint Columba*, III. xxiii., stating that the stone used by St. Columba as a pillow was set up by his grave; and Mr. Drummond then goes on to say: 'Can the stone be the pillow to which Adamnan refers? If this could be proved, it would certainly be a stone of great interest, and of still greater interest if it could also be shown that it took the place of the body of the Saint when it was removed. It is certain to have been a relic held in great veneration. Reeves tells us that the stone pillow of St. Kiaren of Clonmacnois existed in the monastery when his life was written, and was venerated by all. A still more worshipful esteem was sure to be accorded to the pillow of St. Columba.'

The shape and size of the stone, and the fact that it was found near the Cladh-au-Diseart, or ancient burial ground, one of the traditional burial places of St. Columba (the other is to the west of the Abbey Church), seem to favour the supposition that this stone is the identical pillow-stone mentioned by Adamnan in this interesting passage.



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